ENCOUNTER

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Answers to 34 Questions

An Interview with Igor Stravinsky

ROBERT CRAFT—When did you become aware of your vocation as a composer? Can you describe this *prise de conscience*?

IGOR STRAVINSKY—I do not remember when and how I first thought of myself as a composer. All I remember is that these thoughts started very early in my childhood, long before any serious musical study.

Q—Would you describe Rimsky-Korsakoff as a teacher?

I. S.—He was a most unusual teacher. Though a professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory himself, he advised me not to enter it; instead he made me the most precious gift of his unforgettable lessons (1903–06). These usually lasted a little more than an hour and took place twice a week. Schooling and training in orchestration was their main subject. He set me Beethoven piano sonatas and quartets, and Schubert marches to orchestrate, and sometimes his own music the orchestration of which was not yet published. Then, as I brought him the work I did, he showed me his own orchestra score which he compared with mine explaining as he did so his reasons for doing it differently. In addition to these lessons I actively continued my contrapuntal exercises, but by myself, as I could not stand the boring lessons in harmony and counterpoint I had had with a former pupil of Rimsky-Korsakoff.

Q—What music of yours did Rimsky-Korsakoff know? What did he say about it? What were his relations with new music: Debussy, Strauss, Scriabin?

I. S.—He knew well my *Symphony in E flat* dedicated to him, and also my vocal suite *Faune et Bergere*, both performed in a concert arranged with his help and supervision. He had seen the manuscript of my *Scherzo Fantastique* but his death prevented him from hearing it. He never complimented me; he was always very close-tongued and stingy in praising his pupils. But I was told by his friends after his death that he spoke about the *Scherzo* score very eulogistically. When asked to go to a concert to hear Debussy's music he said: "I have already heard it; I had better not go: I will start to get accustomed to it and finally like it." He hated Richard Strauss but probably for the wrong reasons. His attitude towards Scriabin was different. He didn't like Scriabin's music at all but to those people who were indignant about it his answer was ready: "I like Scriabin's music very much."

Q—WHEN you were a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakoff did you esteem Tchaikovsky as much as you did later in the twenties and thirties?

I. S.—Then as later in my life I was annoyed by the too frequent vulgarity of his music, annoyed in the same measure I enjoyed the real freshness of Tchaikovsky's talent (and his instrumental inventiveness) especially when I compared it with the stale naturalism and amateurism of the "Five" (Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Cui, Balakirev, and Moussorgsky).

Q—Of your early contemporaries to whom do you owe the most? Debussy? Do you think Debussy changed from his contact with you?

I. S.—I was handicapped in my earliest years by influences that restrained the growth of my composer's technique. I refer to the St. Petersburg Conservatory's academicism from which, however, and fortunately, I was soon free. But the musicians of my generation and myself owe the most to Debussy. I don't think there was a change in Debussy as a result of our contact. Reading his friendly and commendatory letters to me (he liked *Petroushka* very much) it is rather puzzling to find quite a different feeling concerning my music in some of his letters to his musical friends of the same period. Was it duplicity, or was he annoyed at his incapacity to digest the music of the *Sacre* when the younger

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generation enthusiastically voted for it? This is difficult to judge now at a distance of more than forty years.

Q—What were Diaghilev's powers of musical judgment? What, for example, was his response to *Le Sacre du Printemps* when he first heard it?

I. S.—Diaghilev did not have so much a good musical judgment as an immense flair for recognising the virtuality of success in a piece of music or a work of art in general. In spite of his surprise, when I played him the beginning of the *Sacre* (*Les Augures Printanières*) at the piano—in spite of his, at first, ironical attitude to the long line of repeated chords, he quickly realised that the reason was something other than my inability to compose more diversifying music; he realised at once the seriousness of my new musical speech, its importance, and the advantage of capitalising it. That, it seems to me, is what he thought on first hearing the *Sacre*.

Q—Schoenberg. Describe your meeting with him in Berlin in 1912. Did you speak German with him? Was he cordial, or aloof? Was he an able conductor of *Pierrot*? Webern was present in the Berlin rehearsals of *Pierrot*; do you have any recollection of him? You wrote about the instrumentation of *Pierrot* but not about its use of strict contrapuntal devices; its atonal polyphony; how did you feel about these innovations at the time?

I. S.—Diaghilev invited Schoenberg to hear my ballets, *Firebird* and *Petroushka*, and Schoenberg invited us to hear his *Pierrot Lunaire*. I do not remember whether Schoenberg or Scherchen or Webern conducted the rehearsals I heard. Diaghilev and I spoke German with Schoenberg and he was friendly and warm and I had the feeling that he was interested in my music (especially in *Petroushka*). It is difficult to recollect one's impression at a distance of forty-five years; but this I remember very clearly: the instrumental substance of *Pierrot Lunaire* impressed me immensely. And by saying "instrumental" I meant at that time not simply the instrumentation of this music but the whole contrapuntal and polyphonic structure of this brilliant instrumental masterpiece. Unfortunately I do not remember Webern—if I did meet him.

Q—And Berg, did you know him?

I. S.—I met him only once, in Venice in September 1934. He came to see me in my green room at La Fenice where I conducted my *Capriccio* in a Biennale concert with my son Soulima at the piano. Although it was my first sight of him, and I saw him for only a few minutes, I remember I was quite taken by the spell of his famous charm and subtlety.

Q—WHILE you are reminiscing would you describe your last meeting with Proust?

I. S.—After the premieres of *Mavra* and *Renard* in June 1922 I went up to a party given by a friend of mine, Princess Violette Murat. Marcel Proust was there also. Most of the people came to that party from my premiere at the Grand Opera but Proust came directly from his bed, getting up as usual very late in the evening. He was a pale man, elegantly and Frenchly dressed, wearing gloves and a cane. He talked to me about music and expressed much enthusiasm of the late Beethoven quartets, enthusiasm I certainly would have shared were it not a commonplace among the intellectuals of that time and not a musical judgment but a literary pose.

Q—Klee, Kandinsky, Busoni attended the 1923 Weimar performances of *Histoire du Soldat*. Do you remember anything about these gentlemen at the time?

I. S.—I was only a very short time at Weimar —just time enough for the rehearsals and the performance of *Histoire* conducted by Herman Scherchen. Of the three artists you mention I met only Ferruccio Busoni, who was sitting at this performance in the same box as I was. He seemed to be very much touched by the work. But whether it was the play of Ramuz, my music, or the whole together, it was not easy to determine, especially since I knew that I was his *"bête noire de la musique."* Unfortunately I did not meet Paul Klee there nor later in my life. I did have the good fortune to know Kandinsky later in Paris in the 1930's and I will always remember him as an aristocrat, *un homme de choix*.

Q—Do you agree with Schoenberg's premise that a good composition is playable in only one tempo? (Schoenberg's example of a piece of music of uncertain tempo was the Austrian hymn from Haydn's *Emperor quartet*.)

I. S.—I think that any musical composition must necessarily possess its unique tempo (pulsation); the variety of tempi comes from performers who often are not very familiar with the composition they perform or feel a personal interest in interpreting it. In the case of Haydn's famous melody, if there is any uncertainty in the tempo the fault is in the alarming behaviour of its numerous interpreters.

Q—YOU protest that you are a doer, not a thinker, that composing is not a department of conceptual thinking, that your nature is to compose music and you compose it naturally, not by acts of thought or will. A few hours of work on about one third of the days of the last fifty years have produced a catalogue which testifies that composing is indeed natural to you. But how is nature approached?

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I. S.—When my main theme has been decided, I know in general lines what kind of musical material it will require. I start to look for this material, sometimes playing old masters (to put myself in motion), sometimes starting directly to improvise rhythmic units on a provisional row of notes (which can become a final row). I thus form my building material.

Q—When you achieve the music you have been working to create, are you always sure of it, do you always instantly recognise it as finished, or do you sometimes have to try it during a greater period time?

I. S.—Usually I recognise my find. But when I am unsure of it I feel uncomfortable in postponing a solution and in relying on the future. The future never gives me the assurance of reality I receive from the present.

Q—You have often remarked that the period of harmonic discovery is over, that harmony is no longer open to exploration and exploitation. Would you explain?

I. S.—Harmony, a doctrine dealing with chords and chord relations, has had a brilliant but a short history. This history shows that chords gradually abandoned their direct function of harmonic guidance and began to seduce with the individual splendours of their harmonic effects. Today harmonic novelty is at an end. As a medium of musical construction, harmony offers no further resources in which to inquire and from which to seek profit. The contemporary ear (and brain) requires a completely different approach to music. It is one of Nature's ways that we often feel closer to more distant generations than to the generation immediately preceding us. Therefore, the present generation's interests are directed towards music before the "harmonic age." Rhythm, rhythmic polyphony, melodic or intervallic construction are the elements of musical building to be explored today.

Q—How has composing with a series effected your own harmonic thinking? Do you work in the same way, that is, hear relationships and then compose them?

I. S.—I hear certain possibilities and I choose. I can create my choice in serial composition just as I can in any tonal contrapuntal form. I hear harmonically, of course, and I compose in the same way I always have.

Q—Nevertheless, the Gigue from your *Septet*, the choral canons in the *Canticum Sacrum*, the Pas de Deux from *Agon* and parts of your new Tenebrae service are radically more difficult to hear harmonically than any earlier music of yours. Hasn't composing with series therefore effected your harmonic scope?

I. S.—The serial technique I use impels me to greater discipline. It is certainly more difficult to hear harmonically the music you speak of than my earlier music; but so is any serial music intended to be heard vertically more difficult to hear. The rules and restrictions of serial writing differ little from the rigidity of the great contrapuntal schools of old. At the same time they widen and enrich harmonic scope: one starts to hear more things and differently than before.

Q—The musical idea: when do you recognise it as an idea?

I. S.—I recognise musical ideas when they start to exert a certain kind of auditive sense. But long before ideas take shape I begin work by relating intervals rhythmically. This exploration of possibilities is always conducted, in my case as well as in Webern's, at the piano. Only after I have established my melodic or harmonic relationships do I pass to composition. Composition is a later expansion and organisation of materials.

Q—Is it always clear in your mind, from the inception of the idea, what form of composition will develop? And the idea itself, is it clear what instrumental sound will produce it?

I. S.—You should not suppose that once the musical idea is in your mind you will already see more or less distinctly the form your composition may evolve. Nor will the sound (timbre) always be present. But if the musical idea is merely a group of notes, a motif suddenly coming to your mind, it very often comes together with its sound.

Q—IN your own music, identity is established by melodic, rhythmic, and other means, but especially by tonality. Do you think you will ever abandon the tonal identification?

I. S.—Possibly. We can still create a sense of return to exactly the same place without tonality: musical rhyme can accomplish the same thing as poetic rhyme. Form cannot exist without identity of some sort.

Q—Do you think of the intervals in your series as tonal intervals, that is, do your intervals always exert tonal pull?

I. S.—The intervals of my series are attracted by tonality; I compose vertically and that is already, in one sense at least, to compose tonally.

Q—Do you work with a dialectical conception of form? Is the word meaningful in musical terms?

I. S.—Yes to both, in so far as the art of dialectics is, according to the dictionaries, the art of logical discussion. Musical form is the result of the "logical discussion" of musical materials.

Q—Your music always has an element of repetition, of *ostinato*. Webern uses *ostinato* also, although very rarely, in an architectural way, to create tension—Webern's Abendland III in Opus 14, bars 12–13 in bass clar., and the 5th

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variation in the symphony. What is the function of *ostinato*?

I. S.—It is static, i.e., anti-development, and sometimes we need a contradiction to development. However, it became a vitiating device and was at one time overemployed by many of us.

Q—While composing do you ever think of an audience? Is there such a thing as a problem of communication?

I. S.—When I compose something I cannot conceive that it should fail to be recognised for what it is, and understood. I use the language of music, and my statement in my grammar will be clear to the musician who has followed music up to where I and my contemporaries have brought it.

Q—How do you understand Webern's remark: "Don't write music entirely by ear. Your ears will always guide you aright, but you must know why."

I. S.—Webern was not satisfied with the—from one point of view—passive act of hearing: he requires the hearer, whether composer or listener, to make cognisant relations of what he hears: "you must know why." He obliges the hearer to become a listener, summons him to active relations with music.

Q—Paul Valéry said "We can construct in orderly fashion only by means of a group of conventions." How do we recognise these conventions in, say, Webern's songs for clarinet and guitar?

I. S.—We don't. An entirely new principle of order is found in the Webern songs which in time will be recognised and conventionalised. But Valéry's essentially classical dicta do not foresee that new conventions can be created.

Q—In your Greek-subject pieces, *Apollo*, *Oedipus*, *Orpheus*, *Persephone*, dotted rhythms are of great importance (the opening of *Apollo*: the canonic interlude in *Orpheus*; the "Underworld" music in *Persephone*, the opening chords of Pt. 2, the oboe solo, the harp motive; Oedipus' F major aria). Is the use of these rhythms a conscious stylistic reference to the 18th century?

I. S.—Dotted rhythms are characteristic 18th-century rhythms. My use of them in these and other works of that period, as the introduction to my *Piano Concerto*, are conscious stylistic references. I attempted to build a new music on 18th-century classicism using the constructive principles of that classicism (which I cannot define here) and even evoking it stylistically by such means as dotted rhythms.

Q—A novelist (Isherwood) once complained to you of his difficulties in a technical question of narration. You advised him to find a model. How do you model in music?

I. S.—As I have just described in the case of 18th-century dotted rhythms; I have modelled this conventional rhythmic device so that I could "construct in orderly fashion."

Q—Isn't Busoni's famous "attempted definition of melody" (1922) a fairly accurate prophecy of the melodic conception of many young composers today: "a series of repeated rising and falling intervals, which are subdivided and given movement by rhythm; containing a latent harmony within itself and giving out a mood-feeling; it can and does exist independently of words as an expression and independently of accompanying parts as a form; in its performance the choice of pitch and of the instrument makes no different to its essence."

I. S.—The last two points are the most remarkable, coming from Busoni. The idea that the actual pitch of the note is not so important in an absolute sense has been supplanted, to my mind, by the idea that pitch matters only because of the interval. Today the composer does not think of notes in isolation but of notes in their intervallic position in the series, in their dynamic, their octave, and their timbre. Apart from the series "notes" are nothing; in it, their recurrence, their pitch, their dynamic, their timbre, and their rhythmic relation determine form.

Q—WHAT piece of music has most attracted you from a composer of the younger generation?

I. S.—*Le Marteau Sans Maître* by Pierre Boulez. The ordinary musician's trouble in judging composers like Boulez and the young German Stockhausen is that he doesn't see their roots. These composers have sprung full grown. With Webern, for example, we trace his origins back to the musical traditions of the 19th and earlier centuries. But the ordinary musician is not aware of Webern. He asks questions like "What sort of music would Boulez and Stockhausen write if they were asked to write tonal music?" It will be a considerable time before the value of *Le Marteau Sans Maître* is recognised. Meanwhile I shall not explain my admiration for it but adapt Gertrude Stein's answer when asked why she liked Picasso's paintings: "I like to look at them"—I like to listen to Boulez.

Q—Do you know the present status of your music in Eastern Europe?

I. S.—Friends who attended the Warsaw conference of contemporary music last October say that my music was officially boycotted there but enthusiastically received nevertheless by composers from the Soviet sphere. My music is unobtainable, all of it and in any form, disc or printed score, in Eastern Europe, not only my music but Webern's, Schoenberg's, Berg's as well. Russia's musical isolation—she will call it

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our isolation—is at least thirty years old. We hear much about Russian virtuoso violinists, pianists, orchestras. The point is, of what are they virtuosi? Instruments are nothing in themselves; the literature they play creates them. The mandoline and guitar, for instance, did not exist until Schoenberg imagined them in an entirely new way in his *Serenade*. A new musical masterpiece of that kind is a demand that musicians be created to play it. The Soviet virtuoso has no literature beyond the 19th century.

I am often asked if I would consent to conduct in the Soviet Union. For purely musical reasons I could not. Their orchestras do not perform the music of the three Viennese and myself, and they would be, I am sure, unable to cope with the simple problems of rhythmic execution that we have introduced to music fifty years ago. The style of my music would also be alien to them. These difficulties are not to be overcome in a few rehearsals; they require a twenty or thirty year tradition. I discovered something of the same situation in Germany at the end of the war. After so many years of Hitler in which my *Histoire du Soldat*, Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Berg's and Webern's music were banned, the musicians were unable for a long time to play the new music, though they have certainly made up for it since. It is the same thing with ballet. A ballet exists in its repertoire as much as, or more than, in the technical perfection of its dancers. The repertoire is a few 19th-century ballets. These and sentimental, realist, Technicolor *Kitsch* are all the Soviets do. Ballet in this century means the Diaghilev repertoire and the creations of the very few good choreographers since.

Q—Isn't the general public everywhere just as isolated from contemporary music since about 1909 as the Soviet Union?

I. S.—Not everywhere, not in Germany where, for example, Schoenberg's Orchestra Variations are performed as much for the general public as *Till Eulenspiegel* is in the U.S. The year 1909 means atonality, and atonality did create an hiatus for a long time. But Marxists do not explain that "atonality" was an unwithstandable pull within the art. Any explanation based on outside pressures or social incubation is no more than a metaphor. You can't explain musical evolution from without.

Q—DO you wish to say anything about patronage?

I. S.—Haphazard patronage, whether or not it is better than systematic patronage, is terribly inadequate. It called into being all of the music of Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Bartók, and myself, though the majority of our music was not called into being at all, but only written and left to compete against more *gebrauch* types of music in the commercial market. This is part of the reason why four of those composers died in the mid-20th century in humiliating circumstances, or at least, in circumstances that were far from affluent. Patronage has not changed in 150 years except that today there seems to be less of it.

Q—What do you mean when you say that critics are incompetent?

I. S.—I mean that they are not even equipped to judge one's grammar. They do not see how a musical phrase is constructed, do not know how music is written: they are incompetent in the technique of the contemporary musical language. Critics disinform the public and delay comprehension. Because of critics many valuable things come too late. Also, how often we read criticisms of first performances of new music, i.e., of unknown music, in which the critic praises or blames—but usually praises—the performance. Performances are of something; they do not exist in the abstract, apart from the music they purport to perform. How can the critic know whether a piece of music he does not know is well or ill-performed?

Q—What music delights you most today?

I. S.—I play the English virginalists with never-failing delight. I also play the Brahms-Chrysander Couperin. Bach Cantatas too numerous to distinguish, Italian madrigals even more numerous, Schutz sinfonia sacræ pieces, masses by Josquin, Ockeghem, Obrecht, and others are always delightful to me. Haydn quartets and symphonies, Beethoven quartets, sonatas, and especially symphonies like the Second, Fourth, and Eighth, are sometimes wholly fresh and delightful to me. Of the music of this century I am still most attracted by two periods of Webern: the later instrumental works; and the songs he wrote after the first twelve opus numbers and before the *Trio*, music which escaped the danger of the too great preciosity of the earlier pieces, and which is perhaps the richest Webern ever wrote. I do not say that the late cantatas are a decline—quite the contrary—but their sentiment is alien to me and I prefer the instrumental works. We finish our conversation, as I notice, on the music of Webern. People who do not share my feeling for this music will wonder at my attitude. So I explain: Webern is for me the *juste de la musique*, and I do not hesitate to shelter myself by the beneficent protection of his not yet canonised art.

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Henry Fairlie

Brilliance, Skin Deep

The Case of the Daily Mirror

This much may be said; they [the Press] have never hesitated to stand up for the truth when they knew that public opinion was with them; they have never shrunk from denouncing wrong when they perceived that it was unpopular; they have stated the truth when they happened to know the facts; they have not hesitated to have recourse to fiction when they were convinced of its superior validity; they have never had recourse to the tedious and lumberous methods of demonstration when they could rely on the credulity of their readers; and they have never asked for praise when they found that self-satisfaction was a sure means of happiness.

J. E. King, formerly Editor, *Oxford Magazine*, quoted by Lord (then Sir Gordon) Hewart at the Jubilee Banquet of the Central News, 1921.

THE *Daily Mirror* is by far the most successful newspaper in Britain. But that in itself would not be a sufficient title to the extraordinary interest which it has aroused since 1945. Political and sociological students cannot keep their eyes off it. They are awed by it as a social phenomenon. They feel that if only they could understand its appeal they could begin to understand The Mass Mind. It would not be in the least surprising to discover that it is being microfilmed daily at Nuffield College or the London School of Economics, just as one can be quite sure that it is analysed, X-rayed, tested with litmus paper, and washed with chemicals at the two party headquarters, in the hope that one day it will yield its fabulous secret. Talk of the Dead Sea Scrolls; they are not in it.

In the face of this tendency to regard the *Daily Mirror* as if it were some supernatural oracle, I hope it will not seem niggardly to treat it primarily as a brilliant exercise in popular journalism. Every journalist who respects his craft respects the *Daily Mirror*. It comes nearer than any other newspaper, except possibly the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph*, to relying solely on journalism, solely on the presentation of news and views by its own staff, for its appeal. (Even the circulation of the *Times* would dwindle dangerously if the Personal Column, the Births, Deaths, and Marriages, and the crossword were removed.) I emphasise the words, "by its own staff," because one of the commonest resorts of a bad newspaper is the purchase of "big names." A good newspaper should have on its staff someone who can write better about the Middle East than Glubb Pasha or about cricket than Sir Leonard Hutton, or even possibly someone who can write better about Mr. Peter Townsend than Mr. Peter Townsend, and it should rely on him. The *Daily Mirror* usually does.

A good newspaper should also be able to avoid even more obviously artificial and non-journalistic stimulations to circulation such as

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"competitions." Even in the Twenties and Thirties, the *Daily Mirror*, although it was doing none too well at the time, resorted less to "competitions," free gifts, and canvassing than other popular newspapers. Now it eschews them altogether. (The recent competition, which invited readers to submit little essays about the Middle East crisis, and offered three weeks' holiday in Jamaica as a prize, was a characteristic journalistic, and not a promotion, stunt.) The *Daily Mirror* has proved in popular journalism what the *Daily Telegraph*, in the past twenty years, and the *Manchester Guardian*, under A. P. Wadsworth's editorship, have proved in more serious journalism—namely, that it is good journalism and good journalism alone which can make a newspaper successful. At a time when more and more newspapers are coming under a purely managerial control, when editors and journalists are less and less being given their heads, the example of the *Daily Mirror*, no less than of the other two, is of a special value.

THE success of the *Daily Mirror*, then, rests on the quality of its journalism. Of what is that journalism composed? To most people outside journalism that will seem the obvious question; but it is wrongly posed. Neither good journalism nor good journalists are composed of separate and recognisable ingredients. There is no recipe for making a good newspaper or magazine. Over the years scores of attempts have been made to revive a declining newspaper or magazine by taking the ingredients which were supposed to have made it successful in the past or other ingredients which are currently supposed to account for the success of some other journal. They have all been doomed to failure. A good newspaper is made by a good editor (or by a proprietor exercising the equivalent of editorial functions), and what makes him a good editor cannot be artificially reproduced in another. Good journalism is the successful projection of personality, and good editorship is the successful projection of the newspaper's or magazine's personality.

This question of a newspaper's or magazine's personality is, I believe, all-important. Take any of the notable journalistic successes of the past few decades. To what did the *New Yorker* owe its success but to the creation and projection of a vivid personality? And why is that success now fading? Because the personality is becoming a bit of a bore and no longer appeals to a new generation of readers. What did Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge do for *Punch* but change its personality and project it with, not unerring, but unrivalled journalistic skill? What was the difference between the old *Picture Post* and the present-day *Picture Post* but that in the days of its triumph it had a whole, live, integrated personality, whereas today it is an assemblage of articles and pictures? Why has the *New Statesman* maintained its lead among the literary and political reviews but because Mr. Kingsley Martin imposes on it —willy-nilly, maybe, but that is not the point —a personality which makes an unforgettable (even if sometimes unforgivable as well) impact on the reader?

In newspapers it is more difficult to create a personality than it is in magazines: the personality is always in danger of being submerged beneath the day's events. It is, for example, noticeable how much easier it is for the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* to have personalities than their daily equivalents, and it is the development of these personalities which has accounted for their astonishing success since the end of the war. Yet it can be done for daily newspapers. The *Daily Express*, in its greatest days, was given a quite striking personality by Mr. Arthur Christiansen, who will find a niche in history as the débutante's Creevey. Even today it carries the unmistakable accents of the cheap smart, of those who just cannot make the grade to get into one of Mrs. Angela Thirkell's novels. Mr. Christiansen has lost none of his talent for discovering those who can project this accent and this personality. Miss Eve Perrick's feature is in constant danger of crossing the line between the cheap and the vulgar smart, but she can afford a mistake or two because the indomitable spirit of the cheap smart is

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distilled daily into the jokes of Mr. Osbert Lancaster and weekly into the book reviews of Miss Nancy Spain.

THE SUCCESS of the *Daily Mirror* since the middle thirties has been due to the creation of a personality as distinct, as full of flavour and as brilliantly projected, as that of the *Daily Express* under Mr. Christiansen. It is, of course, a proletarian personality. The most significant decision that was taken, one which started the *Daily Mirror* on its astounding rise from a circulation of under 800,000 in 1934 to one of over 4,000,000 today, was the decision that it was then, in the words of its editor, Mr. Hugh Cudlipp, "at variance with social trends," that it was "directing its appeal to the dwindling middle-class . . . at the very time when the articulate masses were struggling to raise their standard of living and status in society." To say merely that the *Daily Mirror* now has a predominantly working-class readership misses the point. It is the working-class *personality* which is projected which matters; and the most important fact about this personality is that it is not metropolitan. It is, in this sense, the one London newspaper which is a genuinely national paper. (The *Daily Telegraph*, with its enlivening stories of the doings of Somerset vicars and Shropshire lads, comes nearest to being able to make the same claim, but it is a long way behind.) Compared with the *Daily Mirror*, the personality of the *Daily Express* is purely metropolitan, because it appeals to a class which takes its standards during the day from the City and during the evening from the West End. Life, as far as the *Daily Express* is concerned, can be seen from the top of a No. 13 bus.

In the early days of the revival of the *Daily Mirror* there seems to have been a conscious emphasis on the importance of the provinces. For example, the attention which it gave in those days to the conditions of working girls —"a section of citizens much neglected by newspapers of the time"—is presented by Mr. Hugh Cudlipp as a conscious and deliberate attempt to gain a new class of readers. So it may have been. But the choice of this topic seems to me far more interesting than that, because it suggests a mind not bounded by the metropolis, and it was this attitude of mind, in both Guy Bartholomew, who enjoyed editorial direction from the end of 1934 and followed his instincts, and in his staff, most of whom "had come from working-class or middle-class families in the provinces" and followed their instincts too, which was the secret of the *Daily Mirror* revolution. The whole point about the British working-class is that it is unmetropolitan; its attitudes are remarkably independent of those of the metropolis. And the whole point about the proletarian personality of the *Daily Mirror* is that it is unmetropolitan too. (Even if the *Daily Worker* could sever its connection with Moscow, it would still not be a genuinely British working-class newspaper, because it would still retain its connection with London.)

Once a paper has received a definite personality it is invaluable to it. (The trouble about many of the changes which have been made in the *Times* in the past two years is that they run contrary to its personality. A newspaper may be given a *new* personality successfully; but uncharacteristic features cannot be imposed on its existing personality.) A newspaper with a personality is a newspaper which can fit the events of the day and the facts of life into a whole pattern which makes less an immediate impact than a lasting impact. If I may take an obvious example: no one, unless he is a perverted prude or does not read the *Daily Mirror* at all, would ever accuse the *Daily Mirror* of being a sexy newspaper. Yet sex is a matter of perfectly normal interest, and the readers of the *Daily Mirror* will find their perfectly normal interest in it satisfied unobtrusively. Sex, in fact, fits into the whole pattern of the *Daily Mirror*'s personality as it fits into the whole pattern of most of its readers' personalities. This is very different from the way in which several Sunday newspapers handle sex. There sex is intrusive, pandering to an abnormal and not a normal interest. The *Daily Mirror*

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would probably not care to advertise itself as a clean newspaper but it could, without any disregard for the truth.

The *Daily Mirror*'s personality may not be your personality or my personality, it may not even be the kind of personality which you like to spend much time with, though I have always enjoyed the public much more than the saloon bar, but if you read the *Daily Mirror* with care over a matter of a few weeks you will realise that its personality is so strongly formed that everything falls naturally into the proportions of that personality. You may not agree with the subject to which it gives precedence on a certain day; but that subject is given precedence, not for any external reasons of finding a sensational "lead," but for internal reasons of its own personality. It is this which separates the *Daily Sketch* from the *Daily Mirror* by a gulf so wide that it will never be crossed. The *Daily Sketch* is a newspaper which is artificially made up in the search for circulation, whereas the *Daily Mirror* appears in response to the instincts of a personality. The *Daily Mirror* has a *Geist*; the *Daily Sketch* has not.

THE MAIN lineaments of the personality are easy enough to discern. There is the sentimental decency which is at once heart-warming and frightening. It is heart-warming because the *Daily Mirror* reacts with spontaneous indignation against any open act of cruelty. It was not just by accident that at the beginning of the revolution which changed the paper in the thirties it began to emphasise stories of cruelty to children. These have now become part of the stock in trade of most popular newspapers, and in the *Daily Mirror* they alternate with equally-moving stories about old-age pensioners. This is all very worthy—but it is also a little frightening because the *Daily Mirror* succeeds in creating for its readers the comforting feeling that cruelty is their concern but not their fault, the impression that cruelty is the monopoly of a few *other* people.

This, I think, is the whole point of its Live Letter Box, in which letters from readers are printed with some little comment attached by the "Old Codgers." No other feature in British journalism so superbly creates the atmosphere of a public bar, in which everyone sits cosily round the scrubbed deal tables, arguing the toss about anything which happens to crop up, while the Old Codgers buy pints of mixed for the dads, and ports and lemon for the dear old mums. God's in his Heaven—well, let's say He is, it's so much simpler—and all's right with the world; at any rate, what is wrong with the world is the fault of other chaps; it is *they* who do not work hard enough; *they* who are cruel; *they* who misgovern. It is the cosiest feeling in the world, and the *Daily Mirror* makes sure that from Monday to Saturday all its readers start the day with this pleasant glow surrounding them. "Lay psychologists"—that is what Mr. Hugh Cudlipp calls the journalists on the *Daily Mirror*. Well, they certainly know how to eradicate their patients' guilt feelings.

The sentimental decency of the *Daily Mirror* is, of course, at the root of what it would like to call its social conscience, the same sentimental decency that helped to create the Labour Party. It is stirred to protest on behalf of the poor, the homeless, the sick, and the out-of-work. But, beyond the protest, there is the old claim that it is *they* who are responsible; that *they*, if they wished, could do something about it; that it is only the stupidity or gormlessness of *them* which is preventing the proud from being humbled, the hungry from being filled, and the rich from being sent empty away. There is nothing wrong in all this; but the newspaper which adopts this attitude should not pretend that it is leading public opinion or putting forward a policy. All that it is doing is stirring up a sentimental human interest in the unhappiness of the human condition. Once again one is back in the public bar, saying that it's all a bloody shame and that the authorities should do something about it, before bending one's attention to another hand of cribbage or another drop of dominoes. What good folk we all are, and with what decent feelings. We really do deserve another pint of brown or stout.

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THE authorities—the Government or local council, the police, or the top brass in the Services—what wonderful stalking-horses they make. The British working-man is never happier than when he is having a good grouse against the authorities, and the *Daily Mirror* enjoys having a good grouse for him. It was characteristic of the *Daily Mirror* that in 1940 it indulged in an uproarious campaign against what Cassandra called "Army foolery" but what is more colloquially known as "bull." Here were all the ingredients for a successful campaign, in terms of what the *Daily Mirror* understands by success. Nothing is easier than to make fun of the rules and regulations on which a highly disciplined organisation must be based, and no one is more ready to grumble than an Army private. Today the *Daily Mirror* will still zealously give space to almost any complaint by any malcontent from the ranks, and then devote still more space to a savage diatribe against the brass hats. It is all vastly entertaining to those in Army billets. Whether it bears any relation to the facts of Army discipline is a secondary matter. It is not in the least surprising that Mr. Cudlipp, in justifying the 1940 campaign, sees no reason for saying any more than that it made the generals angry and evoked in the other ranks "a state of jubilation rarely manifested in serving men."

It is, of course, a traditional glory of the ordinary people of this country that they should have little respect for those set in authority over them, especially for those enjoying their moment of brief authority. Much-talking judges, overbearing magistrates, officious policemen, bewigged and beribboned busybodies of every kind—they are all fair game to the bar parlour lawyer, and so to the *Daily Mirror*. It is even possible that the *Daily Mirror*, by the ardour with which it fires abusive epithet after abusive epithet at those in authority, manages to convey the impression that it is vigilant in defending the little man. Certainly I think that some of its contributors are under that impression, and there are times when Cassandra can only be writing in the firm belief that he is Mirabeau, Wilkes, and Bradlaugh rolled into one. But in fact the *Daily Mirror* is not in the least concerned to discover what are the real and incipient threats to the ordinary person's freedom today. It is concerned, once again, only to jolly along (one can put it no more seriously than that) a sentimental resentment of authority. It creates totems which represent authority and invites its readers to join in a primitive dance around them. Seldom, if ever, is it interested or concerned enough to discover and examine the kind of threats which worry most thinking people. One is still in the public bar.

The *Daily Mirror*'s attitude to the action of some trade unionists, in sending their fellow-workmen to Coventry, was characteristic. The *Daily Mirror*, as one would expect, was fired by the inhumanity of this action. It found adjectives to fit the petty dictators of the unions just as abusive as those reserved for brass hats. Its heart was on the right side—as I have been trying to convey, that damning phrase fits almost all the *Daily Mirror*'s attitudes. But, once again, its attitude was basically comforting and sentimental. A few men were behaving stupidly and even brutally; what they needed was a good kick in the pants; that was the sum of its interest in the matter. Not for the *Daily Mirror* to inquire for one moment into the political attitudes which are today encouraging the tyranny of majorities, in the trade unions as elsewhere; not for the *Daily Mirror* to suggest to its readers the uncomfortable thought that it is they themselves who are day by day mortgaging their own freedoms and those of their children; sufficient for the *Daily Mirror* to beef against whatever scapegoat it can find and so escape the troublesome need to examine its own political attitudes and invite its readers to examine theirs. The staff of the *Daily Mirror*, in fact, live in a state of medieval obscurantism, busily manufacturing wax images of the chosen enemies of the day and sticking pins into them.

A WORD must be said in passing about the two most brilliant sorcerers on the staff. I know no one on the *Daily Mirror* who does not unhesitatingly give the greater share

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of the credit for its enterprise to the editor, Mr. Hugh Cudlipp. He is a journalist of genius. His absence from Geraldine House is immediately noticeable. He has (perhaps not surprisingly) all the qualities which, in *Publish and Be Damned*, he asks of the good journalist. The more obvious of these—the sparkle and the initiative, the risks which he takes with the front page and the power which he infuses into his writing—seem to me less important than his ability to "get under the reader's skin and stay there." No newspaper, he has written, can succeed without men in charge "who *instinctively* know what is right, who can assess the temper of public opinion without moving from their desks"—a significant definition of "what is right." Mr. Cudlipp has this instinct. He knows what the public is thinking, what it is interested in, and what it will take, and whatever the contributions made by Mr. Cecil King or by that grey eminence, Mr. Sidney Jacobson, without Mr. Cudlipp's flair they would not avail.

Mr. William Connor who, as Cassandra, is the only real columnist in British journalism today, is not a genius. His range is extremely narrow. He rarely finds out anything new, or has a new idea to offer. Yet, within his range, he is unrivalled, and his value to the *Daily Mirror*, as the easily identifiable image of its personality, is incalculable. He is as important to the *Daily Mirror* as Mr. Gilbert Harding is to TV panel games. He does not have a mind so much as a thesaurus, he does not have feelings so much as reflexes. The combination of thesaurus and reflexes can be alarming. He is at his funniest in raillery, at his most effective in irreverence, at his most surprising in a sudden squeeze of sentimentality. His style never alters. He does not employ adjectives, he press-gangs them into service. In an earlier incarnation he probably followed Wat Tyler, entertaining those around him with bawdy imitations of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Does the talent of these two men and of those with whom they work achieve anything worthwhile? The answer, as I have tried to convey, is a qualified affirmative. And the reason for the qualification, as I have also tried to convey, is that the *Daily Mirror* lacks the quality which it probably most likes to pride itself on—courage.

In an exceptionally revealing passage in *Publish and Be Damned*, Mr. Cudlipp discusses the factors which ensure the success of a newspaper campaign:

However brilliantly or subtly it may be conducted, a Press campaign will fail

if *it flies in the face of public opinion;*

if *it advocates a course of action which the average reader instinctively rejects as unfair or imprudent, or*

if *it deals with an aspect of life beyond the readers' daily experience or interest.*

The newspaper with integrity and a ripened sense of responsibility may advocate lines of national action whether its readers are interested or not. But a campaign will flourish only

if *it is in tune with public opinion which already exists;*

if *it stimulates with new ideas and information a process of thought which has formed in the minds of the masses;*

if *it advocates a solution to a problem or scandal which is angering the average reader.*

Mr. Cudlipp's criterion of a successful campaign, in other words, is one which excites the immediate support of the readers. Accepting no other criterion, he therefore commits his newspaper to no policy which is beyond the readers' immediate grasp or none which will fail to attract their support. Within the limits imposed by this criterion, no one will deny the effectiveness of the *Daily Mirror*. It is ruthless in omission and selection; it has no time for qualifications of its argument or fine distinctions of responsibility; it chooses its target and, moving into five yards' range, batters it remorselessly. A war in which Israel, Egypt, France, and Britain all have definite shares of responsibility becomes "Eden's war," and day after day this slogan is punched home. It was characteristic that in the middle of the Suez crisis the *Daily Mirror* printed its back and front pages sideways, so that they could be pinned up in

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factories as a wall sheet. Its manner of argument is the manner of the hustings. It is little concerned whether its readers understand or even deeply believe. It wants only to render them punch-drunk, and is quite prepared to take off its gloves if that is the only way of doing it.

THIS is what belies the *Daily Mirror*'s claim to be an educative force—a claim it would dearly like to make. No one should underestimate the seriousness with which Mr. Cudlipp, Mr. King, Mr. Jacobson, and Mr. Connor take their jobs. They are convinced that they are performing a valuable social function. But in fact they do no more than reflect attitudes which already exist, consciously or unconsciously, in the masses of the people: they reflect, as I have said, the proletarian personality. It was not at all surprising, for example, when last year it suddenly launched into a formidable campaign against the death penalty. It had sensed the gradual shift in public opinion. Here was a perfect example of what Mr. Cudlipp calls stimulating "a process of thought which has formed in the minds of the masses." Forward with the People may be a good slogan and a vastly profitable one, but it degrades the serious profession of journalism whose object must be to inform and excite the reader about subjects which are beyond his grasp and his daily experience.

Can the *Daily Mirror*, Mr. Cudlipp asks, "increase its popularity and at the same time raise its prestige?" There can be no doubt that it is anxious to raise its prestige, and its published pamphlets on such questions as education as well as some of its attempts to teach economics to its readers have been earnest adventures in a more serious popular journalism. They have earned praise and have deserved to do so. But they still show no courage in exploring new ideas, testing accepted ones, and generally upsetting the comfortable assumptions on which readers base their self-comforting ideas. The same sort of caution which again and again has made the *Daily Mirror* hold its editorial pronouncement on a major issue of the day until it has had time to sense which way public opinion is going to lean is responsible for the fundamental triviality of its political and social comment and its fundamental dullness. The day when the *Daily Mirror* is ready to conduct a campaign about the colonies, when it is prepared to tell its readers that they are enjoying an inflated standard of living at the expense of their fellow subjects all over the world, on that day it will be able to claim to be a serious and educative newspaper. But, then, Mr. Cudlipp says that it is impossible to lift the reader's interest much beyond his own doorstep.

The critics of the *Daily Mirror* are usually wrong about it. It is not a sensational newspaper in the sense in which the *Daily Sketch* is; the standards which it encourages are not nearly as false and objectionable as those encouraged by the *Daily Express*, the *Evening Standard*, and the *Sunday Express*, with their idolisation of material success; it is clean and healthily extrovert; it understands the qualities which make the British working-class decent and civilised. It does the job of catering for its class of readers far better than any other British newspaper has ever done. But if it reflects the good features of the proletarian personality, it reflects the bad ones as well. It is mentally lazy, emotionally sloppy, and incurably insular. If Mr. Cudlipp wants the answer to his question, he could do worse than begin by reading Orwell on the British working-class. And if he really wants to shock his readers he could then serialise Orwell—or, better still, find an Orwell of his own. Oddly enough, Mr. Cudlipp has given the best criticism of the *Daily Mirror* himself. It gets under the skin of its readers and stays there. But why be satisfied with being skin-deep?

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A Festive Occasion

I CAME down to Cannes in a four-berth couchette with a Parisian clerk, an Algerian widow, a club-footed grandma, and a dog. At some point during the night the clerk bit the widow, the dog bit the clerk, and the ancient club-booted me in the shins for trying to turn the light on. We entered the dawn in a state of watchfulness, while the clerk licked his wounds and muttered low; "What a pretty pet. What agreeable companions."

Two hours from Marseilles rose the Mediterranean Sea, as smoothly lecherous as ever, silkily tonguing its tiny red-rock coves. And again I was struck by the power of this water—oily with rainbows of morning sun—to shrive as always my nordic nerves and to say; "Forget: indulge!"

It was the opening day of the Festival of Film, and the gate at Cannes station was crowded. Crew-cut newsmen, with cameras charged, had gathered to meet the train. They were pale-drawn and petulant; they stamped up and down, and gazed glumly through all the barriers. "Who's coming, for goodness sake?" they asked. A Festival Officer fussed around them. "Well. For instance. Eddie is coming. Eddie Constantine is. For instance..." There were howls and groans and a spit on the floor. But not even he came. Nobody came. Save me, and the club-footed woman.

The Hall of Festival was facing the sea, shining, splendid and rich. Its façade was dressed in the flags of all nations that stirred to a north-east wind. Inside were pressmen of all the nations, dressed in American coloured shirts, stirring each other for stories. But we were all too early. No names had come. All was chaos and nothing was ready. The publicity booths were only half built; and even our press-cards were lost. A wet-faced woman, with white-cropped hair, met us with soothing moans. "Patience, messieurs. Your cards will soon come. Meanwhile Eddie Constantine is here...." More gloom and groans while we kicked our heels. Then we were shown to the pressroom; and sure enough Eddie Constantine *was* there, in a yachting cap, lonely and worried. We ignored him, and smoked, and looked out at the sea—which was slicing up now into mint-green blocks well-sugared by whipping winds. Eddie C. was too early. We were all too early. There was nothing to do but wait.

Then I heard that someone was handing out tickets for the Gala Premiere that night: "Around the World in 80 Days," by bounty of Michael Todd. I went to the press-desk and stood in line very ready for anything free. But admission it seemed was by invitation only. "You are not on the list, monsieur." "Scandal!" I cried, without emotion, and wandered back to the press-room.

A flashing of cameras greeted me there. Eddie C. had been launched, on a flood of ennui. They had found him a girl—white-shorted, cream-haired—and posed her at one of the typewriters. He leaned on the desk and leered hysterically. The girl fluttered, typed, and looked into his face. Eddie looked into the cameras. The cameras looked into her blouse. There were professional cries of joy and encouragement. Someone undid some more buttons. The girl re-settled her corn-brown legs, the star re-settled his yachting cap, a few extra bulbs were sacrificed, and the party broke up well pleased.

But I was entranced by the ritual; and as the tiny starlet sidled away I watched her bare heels with interest. Plant-like, crisp, and exquisitely portable, she was the first of the crop I had seen. Who was she, I wondered? From what fresh field had she sprung? Her typewriter, deserted now, still held a piece of paper in it; inscribed no doubt with her secrets. Stealthily, then, I whipped it out; on the crumpled sheaf I read:

"Mi chiamo Grazia uf e sono a Cannes per fare un prov di v nostro f f a ho remi f chiamo Grazia e sof a Cann edmo koi s dmmila anos fr sino non..."

A cry of near-wordless ecstasy. Alas, I never saw her again.

IN THE afternoon I collected my press-card, together with publicity material weighing one and a half kilos. It was to be, it seemed, a very

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Olympiad of Films, with entries from thirty countries. The major powers had booths in the Festival Hall; the minor ones worked from the bars. Most of the iron-screened countries were represented, as were the obvious free States, and such unknown starters as Tunisia, Ceylon, and the Lebanon. There would be four films a day for the next two weeks. Meanwhile the curtain had not yet risen, and there was little to be witnessed save the pasting of posters that were going up all over the town.

These posters, bright as heraldic shields, seemed part of a private battle. Those of Britain, it's true, were remote and exclusive. They showed white waves breaking on rocky cliffs, or over the bows of destroyers, or against the stern British chin of Mr. Richard Todd. They properly told our rough island story and seemed to claim to have invented the sea. But the other big countries mixed the battle more closely. Hollywood led with a girl in black tights. Italy countered with a girl in brown tights; even younger, and with a doll. Japan from Italy reclaimed her rice-fields with a young girl knee-deep in a bog. And Russia, astonishingly, moved right in on Hollywood with two lovers embracing in water.

With a book of free tickets stuffed into my pocket, and no films to be seen till the morrow, I walked up the sunlit, windy front, thinking how lucky I was. A mile of white poles were set out like standards, each bearing its propaganda. And my country was not at all backward here, for every fourth pole bore a well-known likeness, each done in that malted-milk tradition so suggestive of homely night-caps. The cosy pantheon of Pinewood stars—brother, sister, scout-leader, and nurse—they gazed reassuringly down upon me alone in that sinful crowd.

Further up was the Carlton, sugar-white and beflagged, holding the Festival's flesh and blood. In the street outside a crowd of witnesses had gathered. Butter-faced schoolgirls with autograph books were waving at a porter in an attic window. The porter waved back—it was Eddie Constantine. I continued my walk and came back an hour later. The girls had all gone, but Eddie C. was still there, drumming his fingers on the window sill. The crowd had moved to stare at the beach, where a large gas-balloon was swelling. As the balloon inflated, so Eddie wilted, but bravely he stuck to his post. The air-bag was one of Mike Todd's devices and a squad of police were on guard. I approached one of these and showed him my card. "A quelle heure partir le ballon?" I asked. The official turned crimson and could not speak. But an older, more sober comrade answered; "It departs, monsieur, at eight o'clock—but only to fifteen metres."

I sat down at a beach-bar and ordered a drink. It was that lambent half-hour, before the setting of the sun, when the light of this coast works miracles with one's self-esteem. The wind had dropped and the world seemed transfigured. Never had mankind looked so well. A coral glow embossed the crowds with a rich and magnificent carnality. Old women passing looked flushed as flowers, old men as noble as Aztec gods; lovers went wrapped in immortal hues; and little pink girls ran over the sands with bare feet trailing pink powdery clouds. There were smells in the air of wine and pine, scorched leaves and sun-festering lilies. For a long, slow instant this minor Babylon hung up gardens of seven wonders. Then the sun sank at last, the cold wind rose, our cheeks turned grey; and the neon lights took over . . .

THAT opening night was America-Night, thanks to Todd and his Jules Verne Colossus. With a series of exclamation marks, nicely chosen, he dominated the town. First came the balloon, a corking stunt: precisely at eight, as the policeman said, it rose floodlit over the sea. And there it swung, at fifteen metres, like a tethered planet or lantern. Two gum-chewing boys, in Victorian dress, hung precarious in its basket. From time to time they doffed their toppers, released more sand, snatched wildly at ropes, looked sick, and cried out through their megaphones. An attempt by ruffians to cut them adrift was beaten off by the police.

Next came the showing of the film—a mink and tiara job. A magnificent squadron of mobile police—the Household Cavalry of Dough—in rampant uniform, with motor-bikes couchant, had been hired to line the approaches. A hundred more, armed with sticks and revolvers, hid in side-streets behind the Hall. Fish-finned cars slid up to the entrance dispensing blonde girls like eggs. Mr. Todd and his wife arrived at last —he biting his lip like a worried schoolboy, she moist as a bunch of violets. Up the carpeted steps he shielded her, scowling most stern and proud. Then the Hall of Festival shut firmly down for the three and a half hours of the film.

Later, at midnight, came the Casino Party, with champagne and caged lions and lobsters. The invitation list of course was limited; but such was Mike Todd's popularity that we all wished to do him honour. Two hundred cards, stolen beforehand, were sold in the streets and bars. Then as the guests arrived, their cards were collared and whipped back to the streets again. The whole of Cannes was at the party; it was the greatest party of all. Mr. Todd, with his missile in the sky; and Todd A-O, the ultimate detergent, had together captured the Festival.

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I DIDN'T see Todd's film that night; instead I went to a cinema in the town where an unofficial film was showing—"L'Empire du Soleil," a blazing trail of the Andes, made by the makers of "The Lost Continent." How contrived it is I cannot say, but I watched it with drunken pleasure. It is a visual bombardment by a world unknown: a vast cinescope of thunderous mountains; there are Peruvian Indians dressed like straw dolls of harvest; dances, festivals, work, and love. There is a woman in labour hanging from a tree; a vulture riding a fighting bull; clouds of black cormorants bombing the sea; surprise, amazement, and poetry....

Dazed by, and dreaming of, this film, I went next morning to see Mike Todd's—which was being shown again for the peasantry. Vigorously conceived, superbly made, and acted with immaculate polish, it sets a girdle round the earth in eighty clichés. (I know where I'm going, and I know what they'll show me....) France?—there was Paris and a postcard chateau. Spain had its bullfight and gypsy dance. ("For the bulls get the best, what's-his-name? Dominguin; for the gypsy that guy José Greco.") Then India, yes, a pretty big place. We'll have rope-tricks and elephants and sacred cows, suttee, a Princess, and General Blimp. Siam is easy; it's King and I. For the old U.S.A., the old-time works: democratic elections, saloon-bar molls, a free-lunch counter, a Kentucky crook, the railroad spanning the Middle West, a Red Indian raid, and some buffaloes. England, of course, is club-life and cabs, a hint of Royalty, and incipient decline....It was jolly, bounding fun all round; but as globe-circling Fogg neared the shores of Britain (sailing mysteriously into a westering sun) I felt the merriment pale a little. It was like being dragged, at once, through a Baedeker dream-book and an international casting-directory (starred pages only). Nothing was spared to us except surprise.

From "Around the World" I came out to the sun, blinded as by a sea of milk. When my sight returned I looked about me. A noon-day party was in full-swing on the beach, watched by a solemn crowd. I flashed my card and joined the revellers and a drink was thrust into my hand. It was one of those gilded anonymous gatherings which seemed to spring up instantly whenever there was a patch of sun. Fat, busy filmmen, their backs to the wind, sold projects one to another. Long-haired girls languored here and there in stately Borzoi silences. Cameramen clicked and crawled and hunted, selecting and rejecting the girls. They posed a red-head with a rubber horse; she flashed frantic smiles, they flashed their bulbs, and the glaring old sun was ignored. A toasty morsel in a raffia skirt, watched glumly for a while. Presently the cameras turned upon her. She dilated, and stripped in the gritty wind, and took up a hundred postures. She writhed on the sands, nubile and shiny, knotting and unknotting her limbs. The cameras sought her, circling slowly. Their long phallic lenses pried and prodded; and she opened generously to them all, fondling with every gesture her idea of the knowledge they had of her.

THE power of the levelled camera on a girl. A moment ago she was a dull-faced bun; now her flesh seemed to burn like an electric fire, and her long green eyes, turning restlessly upon us, sparked with voluptuous longings. I couldn't bear it a minute longer: with my small cheap camera swinging between my legs I waded into the fray.

"It's no good wearing *that*," said a voice. "These girls are experts; they demand *equipment*. Anything less than a Rolliflex and they'll book you for indecent exposure."

The sage who spoke, a pink, Sunday columnist, was squatting at ease on the sand.

"And it's no good looking at her either. That little number is fiendishly faithful. She's got eyes for no one but her girl-friend Lola. Why did you come? This place is a wash-out. There's no love, but *no love* at all. All the girls are on yachts, or are queer as nutmegs. And look at the weather—like a Trades Union Congress. I think I'll go back to Twickenham."

We lunched together in the strong east wind, with the table-cloth nailed to the table. Other gossip-men joined us, wailing, wailing. What are we going to send home? No personalities, no griff, no stories. Princess Grace won't play, I've tried her. Ex-King Peter? No good; only wants puffs for his book. Do you know Somerset Maugham? Well, I've got Dorothy Dandridge. How about getting them together? I'd pay you, you know. A pity. If only Eva Bartok would come....

We drank Calvados through the long afternoon, then drove to the hills for a party. It was given in a villa of rich Baroque icing, commanding a magnificent view. Our host was a painter whose pink-lipped nudes had made him a considerable fortune. There was champagne in the garden, and a swimming pool; the wind had turned soft, and the evening was the colour of peacocks. All the guests began to appear very familiar to me. There were the cameramen from the beach-party. And there were the girls from the beach-party. There were the two cropped boys from the balloon. And there was Mr. Eddie Constantine. When I left at last, the desperate newsmen were trying to get him to jump in the pool....

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THAT night they were showing *Celui Qui Doit Mourir*, Jules Dassin's long-looked-for adaptation of Nikos Kazantzaki's *Le Christ Recrucifié*. Alas, I never got to see it. Instead, I ran full-tilt into an unexpected taboo. At least, it was a surprise to me.

Having arrived at the theatre and shown my card to the flunkey, he suddenly barred my path. "But monsieur is not wearing his 'smoking,'" he said. "Then, alors, he cannot pass." I stood perplexed in the flower-banked foyer. "Who said anything about 'smoking?'" I asked. The big man shrugged. "For the evening, it is obliged," he said. I was cross: I said I had come a thousand miles; I said I had no "smoking"; I even said I was a poet. Streams of black ties were flowing past us. The doorman sent for his superior. "He says he's a poet and has no 'smoking.'" "Throw him out," rapped the chief. So they did.

I went off to a café and worked up indignation. Capitalist dummies and dolls! Was I really going to stand for this? Would Stephen Spender stand for it? Very well, neither would I. I sat down at a table, called for paper and ink, and wrote off a note to Jean Cocteau.

"Cher Maître," I began (in so many words). "This night I was ejected from the Hall of Festival because I wore no 'smoking.' I have no smoking. I come from England to see the films of the world and not to attend a parade. May I, with all the admiration I cherish for you—you who have broken every rule to achieve the supreme law of your own genius—protest against this sartorial dictatorship?" The note had the right Gallic flourish, I thought. The next day, his reply: "You should make as I do," he wrote, in French. "Go to bed at night—and so avoid the necessity of the 'smoking.' But failing this, I enclose a note to help you—though my wishes do not necessarily correspond with my authority." The note he enclosed was sharp as a lance. "To whom it may concern," it ran. "M. Laurie Lee has come to Cannes without his 'smoking'—*mais avec son cœur!* Please be kind enough to receive him *in the manner which he merits*. Signed: Jean Cocteau. President du Festival de Cannes."

Armed with this note I returned the next night. "But monsieur is without his 'smoking,'" droned the flunkey. "He cannot pass." "But, look," I exclaimed, "regard this paper." Slowly, mumbling, he did so. "Please be kind enough to receive him in the manner which he merits," he read.... So they threw me out again.

I stood in the street, dazed and nonplussed, as though a cheque had bounced hard in my face. Then I gathered myself and fought my way back. I found the superior and rubbed the note in his face. "Read it," I cried. "These are not idle words." He read it twice, and slumped, and bit his lip. "All right," he sighed wearily. "I suppose you must pass. But not till the lights go down."

In fact, from then on, I was admitted, *sans smoking*, to soirées of every description.

CANNES Film Festival is a great Spring Fair which caters for all lines of business. Nationalism offers its barking side-shows and distributes free dollops of snake-oil. Film-renters meet to buy and exchange—job-lots, shockers, new or old, a Sofia Loren for two Monroes—according to the state of the market. Famous screen shadows incarnate themselves, can be seen on the beaches and touched in the bars. Girls, with new lines in thighs or eyebrows, offer themselves here for discovery. Newspaper-gossips, their ears in the sand, hatch the rumours their readers know. Everyone lives on expenses and bluff, Cannes take its cut; and the films themselves, chosen for showing, are inclined to come least on the list.

But the glue that binds this Fair together is mixed by the parties that everyone gives. According to the geography of our particular hosts, we lived in Cannes on champagne and nuts, champagne and vodka, champagne and schnapps, champagne and saké, champagne and gin. Every morning we wore, like a national decoration, a different species of hangover. And although every party had a separate point of departure, each achieved common ground in the end.

I go to the Carlton, the Casino, the Martinez; I go to the Whisky à Gogo. The hosts that receive me are from all over the forest; the resulting scrum is the same. A fight at the bar formally opens the ball. Contemptuous waiters, stern and forbidding, ladle drinks like free soup for the poor. The champagne flows, or trickles, or dries, in controlled and strategic tides. I am rubbing elbows now with a lifetime of film-going. Little did I think, I say. Once cherished faces, the sex-symbols of my youth, swim fading before my eyes. Vivian Romance leans near and asks for a light (her shape on that Naples bed!) And there's Lilian Harvey—with whose image I once climbed a beech-tree.... Both comfy now, like my Auntie Alice. Maria Schell embraces me, smiling bright: "Dear poet," she sighs, "we must meet again." She turns to the arms of her co-star, Curt Jurgens. Photographers gather; lights flash; they cling together. But not for long, alas. A carbon-eyed girl slides into the picture, grabs Curt's other arm and stays put. "My very best husband," she breathes in his ear. Her cat-like body strokes him slowly, her inked-face purrs and glows. Who is this? Eva Bartok! A happy sensation. Miss Maria Schell

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looks grave, Miss Bartok looks legal, Herr Jurgens a double-head winner.

So the parties sparkle, and spill, and flatten. There is Ram Gopal, in an astrakhan hat, leaning beautifully against a pillar. And a Russian star, with a water-scrubbed face—Strict Baptist Chapel, she. The Japanese soirée meets all our wishes. Lanterns surround us. Little men bow. Their girls have piled hair, kimonos, and clogs, and pretty print parachutes at the rear. Recorded music comes out of the walls—drums and plucked strings and pipes. "What music is this?" I ask a small doll. She drops her slant-eyes, bobs her bobbin-filled hair: "It is very provincial," she says. "It does not signify." "Your kimono is beautiful." "It's the first time I wear one. I live in South Kensington, see." Rice-chicken and saké are served until two—then the lights are switched off like a pub.

But the party I remember best of all was the luncheon served up by the French. We were piled into coaches and driven from Cannes as though in full flight from the plague. At a handsome auberge, alone by the sea, the hors d'œuvres lasted two hours. Food, and flowers, and wine, and girls, entirely surround us there. And the girls, printed on my eyes by that hot afternoon sun, are those I remember now.

There was Jackie, a cool, blue, straw-hatted beauty who smiled blindly at the call of her name. There was a bare-footed Tahitian who sang love songs to a guitar, then covered her face in confusion. There was a young French actress, schooled at Gerrards Cross, who spoke fondly of hockey and rissoles. There was a tumbled, teen-age apparition, with wide, crushed, elderberry eyes set in a cream-white face, who looked vague, dreamy, and ever-ready for bed. And there was Eva Bartok. There she was with the long hair, and violet eyes, and tight check trousers buttoned down the back. And there was Eva Bartok. There was the kitten with fringe, exhausted childish face, and chemical yellow lips. And a tiny Italian scampi scampering among her lovers. And again there was Eva B....

But such are the flesh of the cinema, the figured flames through which it projects itself. Britain, it's true, seems to get on pretty well without them, relying for the main burden of its message on the shutter-lipped hero and the family joke—with the girls, at most, their stooges and waiting wives. Hollywood has built up the lactic, ageless Mom, sterile by rule, but whose lovers become her sons. But here and there, on the fringes of France and Italy, the White Goddess of cinema is still a force. One saw her in Cannes again and again—live-blooded, hare-brained, earthy-beautiful—her very vagueness itself a vessel of truth, her figure a legend-bearer. Such girls, mysterious in origin, renew themselves each year, bringing skins of light and names of poetry—Nicole, Mylene, Ma-Ea-Fior. As they pass from darkness into darkness their motions, shapes, and unstoried faces are the camera's ideal reflectors. They are the divine animators of the cinema dream, and can endure in that priceless purpose. So long as they are loved, encouraged in mystery, kept womanly raw, and told nothing.

As for the films themselves: my stay was limited, I saw about half, but these included some of the most notorious. One could not believe that all were their country's best; their selection at times was inscrutably unexplained; pains had been taken that no one should be offended; but almost all of them shared one quality. Blatant or implied, according to origin, most films enshrined some large or tiny lie without which they would not have been made. The high cost and corporate talent involved in modern film-making depends for its existence on sponsorship. And every sponsor—be he political, moral, or plain money-grubbing—demands the transmission of some particular illusion. Even so, we had fun and saw much to arrest us; spotting the angle was part of the fun.

The Russian film, "Forty and One," was the greatest curio of them all. Slow, long, and exquisitively coloured, at first one just could not believe it. A girl partisan, and her White Russian prisoner, are cast on a desert island. She guards him with scorn and contempt to begin with, then radiantly falls in love. Sequences of extraordinary tenderness follow, but he's a White Russian after all. His companions come to rescue him, and she shoots him in the back. It seems you may love your enemy; —if you kill him in the end.

Another that finally betrayed itself, though not before exploring some sharp, uneasy truths, was "The Bachelors' Party," made by the "Marty" team. Here is a film of smooth and cunning realism. It is the cry of the American male caught fast in the bogs of biology and business. Four clerks on a spree, depressed and hysterical, are seeking their lost stag-selves. All in a way are ham-strung by sweethearts and wives, and at last they decide to rebel. For an awful moment they reach a state of aching honesty with each other. Then the police-cars of conscience pick them up one by one, and family life is saved.

The other films, though wildly mixed in quality, all strained to sell something or other. The Polish "Kanak," a savage nightmare of the last days of the Warsaw Rising, seemed to me entirely pitiless. The doomed resisters, in their

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battlefield of sewers, are slowly and bestially slaughtered. All is useless sacrifice, filth, and nihilism. So perish all heroes, everywhere, who rise without Soviet sanction. The Lebanon's "Destination Unknown" is a slow, amateurish parable designed to discourage emigration. "Earth," from Bulgaria, is a tale of greed, demonstrating how the personal land-hunger of a selfish young man can lead him in turn to betray his sweetheart, marry a hunch-back, murder his brother, lose all his friends, and die in the snow from d.t.'s. There was also Yugoslavia's "Valley of Peace," a moving allegory in which two young children, and a Negro G.I., search for a world without war. A wild white horse, the burial of a doll, and a motionless mill-wheel are typical of its symbolism.

But the "House of the Angel," from the Argentine, was for me the best of them all. This is a stifling study of Catholic claustrophobia, a tragedy of manners. A fourteen-year-old girl, imprisoned by the brooding proprieties of her class, feels the first fevers of sexual desire. Her sleep-walking body becomes the centre of storm. Thunder-cloud images pile up around her —bedrooms, shutters, trees, faces, the black crêpe of her mother, stilted walks in the park. Even her nightly bath, in a nun-like shift, brings its touch of strangling horror. Then a friend of her father's, on the eve of a duel, comes to spend the night in the house. Convinced he will die, she is drawn to his room. The storm hangs between them, then savagely breaks. In a silent lashing of limbs and hair, the man subdues and rapes her. She returns to her room and waits for his death. But he survives the duel to haunt her. In a trance of shame she lives out her life. Each week her ravisher dines at her house; bound to him now in her disgust, withered and dumb by that strike of lightning, she still waits for his death, or for hers.

After the showing of this film, its director, Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, made an anti-Peron speech and praised the new Argentine government. But his remarks seemed irrevelant to his achievement. For of all the films I saw at the Festival this one seemed to possess the least strings. In its power of mood and flow of image, in the startled handwriting of its personal style, it was a perfect gem of cinema. Shuffled off-handedly into a morning double-feature, it was loudly acclaimed by the critics. But as far as I know it got no official recognition. Nor did the remarkable "Kanak," for all its brutal cynicism. Nor did any of the other bold ones. The Golden Palm went to "Friendly Persuasion"—Wyler's whimsey in Quaker Corn.

THE Festival was already half-way through when my time for departure arrived. Cruel winds whipped the sea and chilled all spirits. The U.S. 6th Fleet was away off Jordan. H.M.S. "Birmingham" arrived to see Todd down the Yangtse. Pressmen packed up and pursued scandals to Rome. Most stars had long fled—even Eddie Constantine was gone.

So I looked my last at carnal Cannes, and drank milky-Pastis and studied the crowds. The locals already seemed back to normal. Moneyed widows with huskies swept by in flash cars. Old ladies tottered off to the Tables. There was a beach-girl in briefs parading around with a trade-name lip-sticked on her bottom. And every so often a honey-locked boy, handsome, tight-trousered, with matted chest, walked up and down, and up and down—a dream of hairy with the light brown jeans.

Hazily I tried to sum up the films I had seen while television in the bar behind me snared the old fishermen's eyes. My mind clicked with images and I started a poem. But for whom? The printed word was out of date, old and gone as the clay tablets of Ur. Instruction now was for mediæval peasants, a shade on a wall, and a preaching voice. "One picture," they say, "is worth a thousand words; and a moving picture a library." I wrote no more, but watched the sun go down. Then I looked through a telescope at the crisp half-moon and at Jupiter spinning its balls.

Finally, I took the night train to Paris, and slept, and had a dream. I dreamed I walked with the Queen of Festival, a pocket-sized beauty in white. Her Grecian dress was too big for her. So I gathered it up and fastened it with a brooch, which I'd swiped from a suicide's body. "You're the prettiest desiccated man I know; the fastest one without feet," she said. We walked hand in hand through the crowded town. Nobody saw or cheered.

Laurie Lee

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FROM THE OTHER SHORE

News of recent cultural trends in the Communist world
edited by Leopold Labedz

ITEMS:—Dmitri Shostakovich has produced a new (Second) Piano Concerto. It was especially written for his son who is a student at the Moscow Conservatory, and who has performed as soloist in its first audition.... The Berliner Ensemble has presented, for the first time in Moscow, a selection of Bertolt Brecht's plays, among them *Mother Courage*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and *The Life of Galileo*. All the productions were highly praised by the reviewers.... The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow and the Hermitage in Leningrad organised a jubilee exhibition of Picasso on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday. As both these museums possess only his early works, Picasso sent about forty of his paintings done between 1917 and 1956.... In 1957, Lenin Prizes were awarded in the Soviet Union instead of Stalin Prizes. There were only five of them for arts and literature (two of them posthumous) compared with the 320 in 1950.... The first volume of the *Collected Works* of the great liberal historian, V. O. Kliuchevski (1841–1911), has been published in Moscow. The full edition will consist of eight volumes.... Camus' *La Peste* has been published in Poland. Camus and Sartre are among the French writers who have contributed to the special number of the Polish monthly *Tworczosc*, devoted to French literature. Its editors explain that, although they approached many Communist writers, only Aragon and Henri Lefebvre responded.

*

THE visit to Poland of Sir Laurence Olivier to present *Titus Andronicus* is the culmination of a Western revival in the Polish theatre. The programme of plays shown this year reads like a list from "What's On In London." It includes, among others: *The Living Room*, *The Giaconda Smile*, *The Mousetrap*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *Waiting for Godot*. The comments on these plays can be startling and unexpectedly topical:

"And Godot? A symbol with so many exponents! God, death, happiness, Soviet Union —all dreams and fairy tales, all possibilities, hopes and myths...." (A. Kiyowski, *Teatr*, April 1st, 1957.)

"But this is a lie; nobody is waiting for Godot. Perhaps Godot is waiting for us, but this is not the same. We were not waiting for Godot during the German occupation, we were waiting for Gestapo; after that we were waiting for the Security Police. Every single moment of life was then a God, we clung to it like a thirsty dog to a puddle...." (A. Rudnicki, *Swiat*, April 14th, 1957.)

*

IN DECEMBER, 1956, the Polish weekly, *Swiat*, reprinted an essay by Isaac Deutscher, "The Conscience of ex-Communists," from his book *Heretics and Renegades*. A young Communist writer, A. Braun, referred to it some months later, praising its "penetrating insight" but expressing some misgivings:

"Deutscher recommends abstention from activity as the only attitude worthy of an intellectual. Unfortunately, this is an impossible attitude for an intellectual living... inside such a society as ours. One has to remember that in our country people were destroyed and liquidated *not for any activity but for that very attitude* [Braun's italics]...." (*Nowa Kultura*, March 3rd, 1957.)

Mr. Deutscher sent a letter to the editor of *Nowa Kultura* (April 7th, 1957) to the effect that "a misunderstanding has occurred" as he did not recommend "abstaining from activity as the only attitude worthy of an intellectual." His essay, he explained, was devoted "to the rôle played in the past, and partly still played *in the West* [Mr. Deutscher's italics] by writers like Koestler, Malraux, J. Burnham, Spender, who have not only broken with the Communist party, but, full of bitterness and vehemence, also condemn the idea of Marxist Communism or Socialism. My polemic was directed against 'renegades' and not 'heretics' of the revolution. It is to them that I have tried to explain that

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'abstaining from activity' would have been for them an attitude incomparably more noble than participation in all kinds of anti-Communist crusades. Does not A. Braun understand the difference between this and the recommendation of quietism and the acceptance of reality by the intellectuals in general and by the Communist intellectuals in particular?"

Pointing back to contemporaries of the French revolution, Mr. Deutscher went on to warn the young Communist "revisionists" that they may be wrong in their attitude "to the Russian revolution because they are too near to it...." That is, of course, precisely their main complaint; but Mr. Deutscher, who is further away, feels more alert to "historical perspective" and sternly reminds them that "the distinction between a 'heretic' and a 'renegade' is relevant not only in the West, but also in the East—in Poland." Mr. Deutscher's final advice to the "revisionists" (who were the *avant garde* of the October revolt) is similar in effect to the advice he had previously given to Malraux, Koestler, and Spender: "To those who, after the last upheavals, do not know who they are and what they want, a period of quiet reflection on the side and a conscientious, possibly passionless, transvaluation of values may do good."

Mr. Deutscher's advice was applauded by the neo-Stalinist review, *Polityka*. But the "revisionists" were unimpressed. One of them, K. T. Toeplitz, summarised the matter pointedly:

"Measuring our problems by the abstract norms of the traditional 'socialist struggle,' Deutscher (at present living in England) entirely misplaced his support and his sympathies. This misunderstanding reminds me of a well-known anecdote about a young Jew who was studying Marxism. Troubled with doubts about the doctrine, he went to a Rabbi and asked: 'Tell me, Rabbi, is it possible to build socialism in just one country?' 'Certainly'—said the Rabbi, after pondering a while—'one can build socialism in one country, but one has to live in another.'" (*Nowa Kultura*, April 21st, 1957.)

*

DUDINTSEV'S *Not by Bread Alone*, and the literary annual *Literaturnaya Moskva*, of which two issues have so far appeared, continue to be attacked, and presumably read—*Kommunist* refers ironically to Dudintsev's "fervent followers." The official line has been made abundantly clear by the *Literary Gazette* which explained that the Zhdanov decrees on art and literature "remain essentially in force." This has been authoritatively elaborated by *Kommunist*, and interpreted by Mr. Shepilov himself at the recent conferences of Soviet composers and painters in Moscow. Dudintsev, Granin, Yashin, Kirsanov, Kaverin, and Aliger were also condemned for "serious ideological errors and one-sided representation of reality" at the plenary session of the presidium of the Union of Soviet Writers held in May.

In Zhdanov's time the centre of heresy was Leningrad and its literary periodicals. Now it appears to be located in the Moscow writers' organisation, which is blamed for "lack of vigilance." The contemporary ferment is greater and the attitude of the non-conformist writers stiffer. In the present circumstances, without the shadow of a Yezhov or a Beria behind Mr. Shepilov, it is not just Zoshchenko or Akhmatova but a whole pleiad of older and younger writers who are refusing to recant. (An exception is Konstantin Simonov, who has half-heartedly apologised for his editorial policy in *Novy Mir*, which first printed Dudintsev's novel.) This expressive silence has angered *Pravda*, which tartly reported that "Z. Kazakevich, M. Aliger, and V. Kaverin did not take a stand at the plenum, preferring to gloss over the just criticism directed at them," and the new chairman of the Soviet Writers' Publishing House, L. Sobolev, who complained: "It is known that Dudintsev's novel became a sort of banner. And however unpleasant it is to talk about it, I must say that some tried to make a similar banner out of *Literaturnaya Moskva*. Yet banners should be defended.... Why have these writers not appeared on the platform to defend their position?" Rarely can an officialdom have been so annoyed by the *silence* of intellectuals.

*

THE following pungent comment on "socialist realism" is by Sergey Mikhalkov, who is also the author of the Soviet National Anthem:

Three portraits
(An oriental fable)

One-handed and one-eyed
The powerful Khan Akhmet
Wanted to be portrayed
So he ordered a portrait.

To his painters, who were three,
He put his wish (not so subtle):
In the picture he wanted to see
Himself on a horse in a battle.

The trumpets call to judgment
Of Khan powerful and great:
The first two painters sent
The portraits they had made.

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The first portrait aroused
His anger and dismay:
The artist had presented
His Khan in a wrong way!

His hands are on a bow and
In his eyes a stern look!
"I have one eye, one hand,
The painter is a crook!

How dare you change my portrait?!
You must atone for that!
Banish the varnisher!"—said
The angry Khan Akhmet.

The other painter the great Khan
Condemned in stronger terms:
"I see through your crafty plan
You double-faced worm!

You want to please my enemies as
You stress that only one
Eye and one hand has
Your ruler Akhmet Khan!"

Thus portraitist-naturalist
His early death has met....
Another trembling painter is
Bringing the last portrait.

As Akhmet Khan does sideways stand
Not showing his full face,
It is not clear if his right hand
And right eye are in place.

The left hand is in fact
Holding a shield, while
The left eye (still intact)
Looks like an eagle's eye!

The shrewd painter grew rich
Reaped high honours on his way,
Died with many orders which
Were thrust on him (so people say....)

Often the artists among us
Employ a similar style:
They don't portray our life en face,
But always in profile....

*

SLOWLY, out of the immense "memory hole" of Soviet history, its prominent victims begin to emerge. Maria Spiridonova,* a legendary figure of the Russian revolutionary movement, came into view in a reminiscence written by a Polish journalist, J. Siekierska. In an article entitled: "My meeting with Maria Spiridonova" (*Swiat*, March 24th, 1957) she writes:

"In a small cell (called a 'dog-house') of the Lefortovo prison in Moscow I met Maria Spiridonova in the winter of 1937.... I spent a few tragic hours with her. She spoke most of the time [the tenor of her remarks being as follows]:

"'...I came to a sad conclusion. Every revolution must end in a counter-revolution. After the Jacobins there must come a Thermidor.... Does this admission make me a political bankrupt? ... But if I had my life to live all over again, I would repeat the hellish cycle.... All of us, including Lenin, were merely history's executives.... After our unsuccessful rising I was imprisoned.... I was released before having served the full sentence. I was sent to Ufa with my husband. I was working as a statistician.... In the spring of 1937 I was arrested again with my whole family. Oh, irony of history or of Thermidor! Today its victims are not only Spiridonova but zealous Bolsheviks. But it does not give me any pleasure; I do not rejoice. I do not curse Stalin and Yezhov for interrupting my peaceful existence. Peace is not my destiny. They will probably make short shrift of me.... I am a little tired. I would like them to put an end to me soon....'

"The key was turned. The guard came to take Spiridonova.... She straightened and her face became grave. She disappeared forever...."

The writer of this article was attacked by *Kommunist* for advocating "humanist socialism." But no reference was made to this reminiscence.

*

ON THE occasion of the re-burial of Rajk, people in Budapest remarked that Communists do not believe in an after-life but they do believe in posthumous rehabilitation. This still holds true after the revolution. By a decree of the Hungarian Presidential Council, all members of the Hungarian Secret Police (AVO) killed during the revolution have been promoted in rank.

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* In 1906, at the age of seventeen, Maria Spiridonova assassinated the deputy-governor of the Tambov region, Luzhenovski, who had distinguished himself by his particularly barbaric treatment of peasant rebels. She was raped by Cossack *gendarmes*, tortured, and then tried in court. The trial provoked a wave of sympathy all over Europe and became a *cause célèbre*. Exiled to Siberia, she returned after the February 1917 revolution and became the leader of the Left Social-Revolutionaries who took part in Lenin's first government. She was arrested in 1918 after her party staged an abortive uprising against the Bolsheviks.

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Peter Wildeblood

English Criminals

"So they nicked old Marmalade, then."

"Yes, what a right diabolical carry-on. Swore blind that he'd screwed the gaff, and on my life he never."

"Who do you reckon grassed him to the Law?"

"Welsh Marlene, that girl he's going with, didn't she? He nicked thirty quid off of her last Wednesday, what she was keeping for the rent."

"Oh, you can't get away from it. He's definitely a bit light-fingered."

* * *

Inspector Tubb gripped the edges of the table until his knuckles showed white. "I'll give you one more chance," he said quietly. "Who stole the Vandercrum sapphires?"

The eyes of the other man rolled helplessly. "Gawdstrewth, guv'nor," he croaked. "I never done it. I ain't never been near the place, strike me pink."

The inspector chose his next words carefully. "So you won't talk, eh?" he said.

* * *

The above fragments of dialogue—one overheard, the other read—have been chosen to indicate the ever-increasing gap between the criminal of fact and the criminal of fiction. Just as interplanetary literature has outstripped the science on which it is based, so has the crime story divorced itself from criminology, becoming so stilted in its conventions that it no longer has any roots in reality.

The first necessity for the author who wants to write a novel about crime should be that he ceases to read, or obliterates from his memory, the works of all his competitors. The only one worth remembering is Henry Mayhew, the Victorian journalist who published his researches as *London Labour and the London Poor*. Some of his clarity survives in the pages of the *News of the World*, but however unexpected and curious may be the insights into the criminal mind provided by Court reports, it is as well to remember that the criminal who has been caught is as unrepresentative as a dry fish in a museum.

The type should be observed, if possible, in its natural habitat. The dearth of social anthropologists capable of doing so is probably the main reason for Mayhew's long isolation in this field. Whereas he collected his material on personal expeditions to Limehouse and Seven Dials, his successors have preferred to do their field-work in the prison cell or the psychiatrist's consulting-room, or, even more comfortably, in a paper nest of statistical reports. The criminal underworld remains virtually unexplored; the territory is huge and unmapped, and it would be presumptuous for a layman to do more than suggest a few possible lines of future inquiry.

The common denominator of the various criminal attitudes has been the subject of many opposed theories, from Lombroso's belief in a predestined "criminal type" to the contention that the delinquent is the victim of his surroundings. All these theories have

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been based on the assumption, which may be mistaken, that the professional lawbreaker can be recognised by some positive element in his personality. The possibility that this element may be a negative one has received little, if any, consideration. It may, therefore, be useful to set the criminal beside his law-abiding brother and attempt to discover what stabilising qualities he lacks.

Firstly, the professional criminal, whether in gaol or out of it, is devoid of that sense of continuity which is the rail along which most people run their lives. For him, tomorrow does not exist. When he performs an act, however trivial or morally neutral, he is incapable of envisaging any consequences except the immediate ones. He is the kind of person who is continually entering into hire-purchase agreements without considering whether he can keep up the payments. This is not only true of material contracts, but of others involving ties with other people, including the members of his gang. The typical criminal is surrounded by goods for which he cannot pay and moral obligations which he has no intention of honouring; that is why all underworld relationships, from the "mob" to the liaison between a housebreaker and his "moll," are characterised by their impermanence.

The existence of gangs in London, recently discovered with apparent surprise by the judicature and the Press, dates back at least as far as Mayhew, who was an expert on the organisation of thieves' kitchens and of the Victorian traffic in street-women. There is in fact some evidence that the London underworld provided the pattern for the gangster organisations which flourished in America at the time of Prohibition. This unworkable law, with its concomitants of bribery and "protection," gave the American gangster the opportunity which has never been lacking in Britain, where the laws relating to betting and prostitution are the main incentives to lawlessness in the large cities.

THE London gangs are primarily concerned either with betting or with prostitution, and the two interests tend to be mutually exclusive. They draw their funds from protection money paid by people illegally engaged in one or other of these activities, just as the Chicago gangsters of the twenties levied their tribute from the bootleggers. Each gang has a hard core of more or less permanent members, and a large number of hangers-on which is frequently changing in composition. Many of these adherents have special qualifications which make them useful from time to time; for example, a gang based on prostitution will have numerous "contacts" among house-agents, landlords of suitable premises, abortionists, lawyers and accountants, purveyors of erotic literature, and so on, who do not form part of the organisation but may be called upon from time to time. In the same way, a gang principally concerned with betting will include in its sphere a number of clerks and book-keepers, in addition to a floating population of "minders" (strong-arm men) and "perchers" or "stick-ups"—decoys who are provided by the gang whenever a street-bookmaker is due for a routine arrest by the Police.

The network created by these organisations is, of course, frequently used for secondary purposes, the most important of which is the planning of burglaries. Although most large-scale robberies are carried out by a team of three or more, the composition of the team is seldom constant. The usual practice is for an informer—often a domestic servant—to approach a member of the gang with information which is then passed on, for a consideration, to the organisers. The next step is for a receiver to be found, who will be able to dispose quickly of the goods under consideration. When this has been arranged, the organisers decide which of their followers are the most suitable for the job, carefully picking a team with the necessary qualifications. The share of the proceeds to be given to each man is decided beforehand, with the lion's share going to the organisers, who are usually in a position, either by threats of violence or by blackmail, to impose their own terms.

It will thus be seen that the concept of the professional criminal as an individualist,

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privately in revolt against society, is a myth. The criminal is as much a slave to the law of supply and demand, to the whims of his superiors, and indeed to bureaucracy, as anyone else. Far from being a Byronic figure exemplifying freedom, he is usually a man who has willingly surrendered himself to the control of a powerful group—a surrender which absolves him from the painful necessity of choice or responsibility. He does not wish to be an individual; his guiding necessity is the same as that of a child or a savage —to lose his identity in some kind of vague freemasonry.

It is hardly surprising that the political tendencies of the typical criminal should be towards Fascism. Among the members of gangs there is quite an extensive Hitler-cult, combined with almost universal anti-Semitism and general racial intolerance. In prison libraries, the most popular books are not detective-novels, but the memoirs of German war-leaders and such documentary accounts of Nazi atrocities as Lord Russell of Liverpool's *The Scourge of the Swastika.* The Hitlerian idea of a mystic brotherhood, ruled by a hierarchy and founded on brute strength, still remains the symbol and goal of the most squalid street-betting gang. This ideal, generally speaking, takes the place of religious aspiration, although a debased form of Roman Catholicism is sometimes encountered. The temporal aspects of the Church of Rome, its power as an organisation and the splendours of its hierarchy, have a certain appeal for the criminal; whereas the Church of England is commonly described as a "racket," with the myth of ecclesiastical ownership of London brothels frequently cited as an instance of hypocrisy. In prison, however, the majority of men describe themselves as belonging to the Church of England, probably because in some prisons it is not possible to attend the monthly film shows without first going to church parade.

One of the attractions, for the criminal, of the gang system is that it calls for little or no self-discipline; what discipline there is is arbitrarily imposed from above. The ideas of loyalty and of obligation to others, which are so repugnant to the criminal mind, are thus excluded from the start. The gang, like the Fascist state, is a false brotherhood based on fear. Not only is there no honour among thieves, but no effective solidarity apart from that engendered by mutual distrust.

The prevalence of the gang system demonstrates better than anything else one of the criminal's most marked inadequacies. The law-abiding man, however much he may submit to the rules imposed by society, still looks upon himself as a focal point around which can be built a private social organism, in which wife, possessions, children, income, home, and occupation play their part. The criminal, being equally incapable of loyalty or of responsibility, wishes only to be a satellite in a system which revolves around somebody else. He is a fatalist, believing his orbit to be fixed; however much he may protest to the contrary, he is the least "free" member of our society, and he is in bondage of his own deliberate choice.

Part of the equipment of any fatalist, from Thomas Hardy downwards, is a strong and pessimistic belief in the power of "Them." In the criminal vocabulary, "They" are not only the forces of law and order, but anyone who is rich, successful, famous, happy, or otherwise integrated into the society with which the criminal believes himself to be at war. The term has a certain elasticity, being stretched to include the victims of almost any crime; a business firm with a vulnerable safe is "They," but so, for purposes of self-exculpation, is an old woman with a small quantity of personal jewellery. In cases like this, the thief is always quick to explain (and not least to himself) that his victim is certainly insured, and indeed probably over-insured to the point of being grateful to anyone who takes the valuables off her hands. In the same way, the theft of pay-packets is considered to be stealing from "Them" rather than "stealing from one's mates," of which the criminal, at least in principle, disapproves.

The delinquent's attitude towards money is as unreal as all his other attitudes. Once he has acquired it, he will apparently get rid of it as fast as he can—moved, perhaps, by some

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residual feeling of guilt. A screwsman, for example, will take enormous risks in order to steal a tray of rings from a jeweller's shop; the "fence" to whom he takes them will first deduct purchase-tax from their retail value, then two-thirds of the remainder for his commission, and give the rest—probably a sum not very much greater than a month's wages in an equally skilled but honest occupation—to the thief. The latter, who depends for his "contacts" on his membership of a number of clubs where fellow-criminals meet, goes to one of them and buys drinks for "the boys" at a cost of £1 or £2 a round, partly out of vanity and partly to ensure that another proposition comes his way when the proceeds of the last have vanished into the cash-register. The professional criminal is a master of conspicuous expenditure: his suit, far from being a seven-guinea Edwardian reach-me-down, is an American-tailored worsted priced at not less than £30, and his car is likely to be something of recent vintage with white-walled tyres and a two-tone colour scheme. His domestic surroundings, however, are usually squalid. Contrary to public belief, the successful gangster or experienced screwsman lives as a rule in an overcrowded apartment in a near-slum district, where his general fecklessness is reflected in a welter of cheap furniture dominated by the inescapable TV set, cocktail cabinet, and radiogram.

The contrast between public flashiness and private squalor also extends to his matrimonial arrangements. A gangster's wife is seldom the fascinating witch so dear to the popular press; she is more likely to be a dowdy, pathetic creature, prematurely aged by anxiety and neglect. The gangster's moll, on the other hand—having been chosen, like the suit, the car, and the cocktail cabinet, for her superficial glossiness—is often startlingly pretty and elegantly dressed. Her rôle, however, is usually an unrewarding one. Occasionally she will be taken by her protector to some public place, but only so that she may be seen; she is not supposed to speak, even to her escort. One of the strangest phenomena in the criminal world is the social outing at which the girls sit apart from the men in Oriental seclusion, their only function being to reflect glory on to whoever brought them there. Generally speaking, the tenure of office of a gangster's moll is extremely brief—a mere stepping-stone from the status of a "mystery," or potential prostitute, to that of a fully-fledged "hostess" (call-girl) or street-walker.

THE possibility of going to prison is regarded by the habitual criminal as an occupational risk; he looks upon imprisonment as an almost inevitable interruption of his career, rather than as an end to it. This does not, however, prevent him from being extremely indignant at the imposition of a long sentence on himself or on one of his friends, particularly if it should be a sentence of Preventive Detention, which seems to act as a real deterrent. Normal periods of imprisonment, alternating with bouts of wild spending, make up the accepted pattern of his life. As Norval Morris points out in his statistical study of recidivism, the length of each prison term has no bearing on the length of time during which the man afterwards "goes straight."

Once in gaol, the confirmed criminal is often a model prisoner, except that he clearly fails to respond to the declared aim of imprisonment "to fit a man for a useful life upon his discharge." The half-hearted way in which this object is at present pursued in Britain may be principally to blame, but the habitual criminal, with his armour of rationalisations and his membership of a community which shares his attitudes, is a very unpromising subject for reform. In some ways the status of a prisoner, apart from its discomforts, suits him very well, for in prison he is deprived for good and all of the responsibility, the necessity to choose, which outside he is always trying to avoid.

Theories about the cause of criminal behaviour change as frequently, and as radically, as theories about the nature of the criminal. The ever-increasing self-consciousness of society has for the past few years nourished the idea that the criminal differs but little from his fellow-men, and indeed

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may be their victim—or the victim of the society which they have built. "There but for the grace of God," "*Nous Sommes Tous Des Assassins*," "Knock On Any Door," are the catch-phrases of this view, which was considerably strengthened during the Second World War and its austere aftermath, when a multiplicity of regulations put a large percentage of the population on a semi-delinquent footing. As Sir Norwood East expressed it: "Crime is not a disease. . . . It occurs when self-regarding behaviour replaces social behaviour and threatens social security. . . . The difference between normal and criminal behaviour is for the most part quantitative rather than qualitative."

Such a view ignores the existence of the hard core of men to whom crime is something resembling a vocation; who choose it as a way of life desirable in itself, and not primarily for the rewards which it may bring. Such men are psychopaths in the sense in which Dr. Robert Lindner used the word in *Rebel Without A Cause*—"a prolongation of infantile patterns and habits into the stage of physiological adultism." He described the typical psychopath as "characteristically aimless, choosing ambitions only within the range of the horizon or impossible of attainment, assuming one task merely to put it aside for another, mistaking each attractive by-path for the promised land."

The impulses of such a person are not merely different in strength from the impulses of his law-abiding brother; they are different in character. The causes which give rise to them are not yet clearly understood. A few years ago, most penologists would have agreed with the Governor of Sing-Sing, Dr. George Kirchwey, that "criminals are selected by force of circumstances (and here the economic factor comes into play) from the community at large." The other reason usually given for a man's descent into criminality was the orthodox Freudian one of a broken home.

Strangely enough, the criminals themselves nearly always give entirely different reasons. Although these are often contradictory, confused, or insincere, it is evident that many of them have chosen their occupation for the excitement, or "thrill," which they derive from it. This discrepancy between the supposed reasons for crime and those volunteered by delinquents is noted in the report of the Prison Commissioners for 1954, in which the Governor of Wormwood Scrubs writes:

" 'Real poverty' is now never given as an excuse for their offences. Most of them claim to live in good houses, generally now Council houses, and to be earning good wages." And of broken homes: "The mere fact that a home is broken does not fully account for criminality. The proportion of broken homes is not really large, and in at least half of them there are other brothers who manage to keep straight."

If it is true that a man takes to habitual crime because of the excitement which it provides, we must try to understand the nature of that excitement. It is not enough to say that the criminal gets a "kick" out of ever-present danger (as foxes are alleged to enjoy being hunted) in spite of the pickpocket quoted by Mayhew: "It gives a zest to us in our life, that we do not know how long we may be at liberty to enjoy ourselves." This feeling of fear and insecurity is unlikely to be one of the prime factors in the choice of a career. Nor, in spite of the great vanity of many criminals, can a desire for personal fame be the most important consideration, since it is obvious that the criminal who attracts the most publicity is the unsuccessful one.

Here, however, a clue is provided by Jean Genet, the French novelist and poet who has himself spent a considerable time in prison for various offences. In his novel *Querelle de Brest*, he says of a young murderer who has been reading the newspaper reports of his crime: "*Il n'avait plus le sentiment de courir un grand péril, mais au contraire il était sauvé car* il était fixé. *Quelquechose de lui allait demeurer puisque son nom demeurerait, étant écrit. . . .*"

This point of view makes the newspaper cutting a symbol of the identity in search of which the young man has killed. It is a familiar theme with Existentialist writers,

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similar to that of Sartre in *Érostrate*, the title of which is taken from the name of the man who achieved immortality by burning down the temple of Diana at Ephesus.

The deliberate, unmotivated, destructive act is, however, a phenomenon which has haunted French literature for more than a hundred years; before Genet and Sartre there was Gide with his "*acte gratuit*" (seen in its purest form in *Les Caves du Vatican*, with the murder in the train) and before him Rimbaud, recommending "*dérèglement de tous les sens*" as a training for the poet; and Lautréamont, and Baudelaire. In Baudelaire's case, the destruction was inflicted upon himself, in a process described by Mr. Quennell as "this deliberate violence done to himself, this assault upon his own moral fastidiousness."

Baudelaire was obsessed, as so many creative artists have been, with the sloth and paralysis of the will—"*cette indolence maussade et niaise*"—which is the enemy of art. His remedy was violent and anti-social: "*J'ai cultivé mon hystérie*," he writes, "*avec jouissance et terreur.*" From this rebellion came great poetry; but the result might equally well have been a great crime.

The impulses which give rise to art, and those which produce a crime, have so many similarities that it is surprising that there have not been more criminal-artists like Villon, Wainewright, and the minor Elizabethans. As the Swiss criminologist Paul Reiwald has pointed out: "It is not by chance that poets have remained outside ordinary life. Even if they are the most human of persons, they are also the most dangerous. . . . The mutual ties between poet, neurotic, and criminal are very close."

THE archetype of criminal who has been described here is, of course, a comparatively rare individual. Of the 23,000 men and women in British gaols, the great majority fall into other categories to which the dictum of Sir Norwood East, quoted above, may be more properly applied. Prison is not, in any case, the best place in which to study the criminal; his behaviour and outlook, like anyone else's, are modified by his environment. It is only in his natural habitat that he is "himself," in so far as he is capable of assuming a clear-cut identity.

The paradox of the true criminal lies in the ambivalence of his attitude towards the idea of himself. Sometimes he seems to be ruled by the desire to make his mark—"to fix himself," as Genet puts it—by some violent act of rebellion against the established order, as though he could only assure himself of his existence by seeing his name in headlines. At other times he seems impelled to submerge his own identity in that of the gang, because he fears the responsibility which being an individual entails. Both of these characteristics may be equally true. The real criminal is, as Dr. Lindner says, "a rebel without a cause"—a man who cannot wait for the gratification of his desires, whether they may be for riches, pleasure, or fame; who tries to establish his identity by a series of short-cuts, as Erostrates did when he ran through Diana's temple with a burning brand.

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Men and Ideas

James Joll: LÉON BLUM

"IF THERE is one novel which I should have liked to have written, it is this." It is with these words that Léon Blum opened his review of a French translation of *Mansfield Park* in 1899; and it might seem a surprising judgment from someone who was to attempt a social revolution in France and to become one of the most controversial of European statesmen. Yet perhaps the paradox of Blum's career is only a superficial one, for both his thought and his political behaviour were singularly consistent. Léon Blum was an intellectual in a country where to be an intellectual is a title of praise. And it is the intellectual quality of his thought and action that made him both a supremely disinterested political figure and, at the same time, someone for whom the shifts and expedients of day-to-day political life in France were disagreeable. Yet, though his political decisions were taken on intellectual grounds and deduced from general principles, it is wrong to depict him, as some have done, as a doctrinaire unwilling to modify his beliefs in the light of experience. He never minded admitting he was wrong. His failure, if he failed, was due as much to the nature of the French institutions and society which he was struggling to reform as to his own political and personal limitations. He certainly was not one of those utopian reformers for whom a single simple solution would make everything come right. "In principle, one must never try to spare or soften for anyone the difficulties of life," he wrote as a young man. His optimism was not that of someone who did not see the difficulties, but of one who saw round and beyond them. In this, perhaps, he was more realistic than his master Jaurès, who tended to skate over the difficulties he could not solve: "In the socialist state," Jaurès once wrote, "there will be people with a vocation to be dustmen." Blum has been attacked for placing his personal integrity above his mission as a working-class leader, and for sacrificing, out of personal scruples, an opportunity of making a revolution. But it is in fact just these scruples that made him a great political figure, since for him the transformation of society had to be as much a moral as a material one; and ends did not justify means.

Blum was no longer a young man when he went into politics. His earlier life was that of a brilliant young æsthete. He had passed through *École Normale Supérieure*, that most formidable training-ground for an intellectual élite, though without completing his course there, and, when still in his early twenties, was a prominent member of the circle around the *Revue Blanche*, and already making a name as a literary and dramatic critic. The recently published first volume of his Selected Works* shows how good a critic he was, quick to recognise new talent such as that of Proust and Gide. When, for example, Marcel Proust's *Les Plaisirs et les Jours* appeared in 1896, he could already see something of what the author of that affected and precious little book was capable, and, while praising its elegance and polish, await his next book "with great impatience and tranquillity." Yet, for all his absorption in the life of the literary salons, his regular appearances at first nights, he was profoundly interested in moral and social problems, and consequently increasingly drawn towards politics—through the example of Jean Jaurès, through his friendship with Lucien Herr, the librarian of the *École Normale*, and one of the great influences in French intellectual and political life over a whole generation, and, above all, through the impact of the Dreyfus case, which suddenly demanded, so it seemed, action from many of those whose participation in political life had, up to then, been detached and academic.

Blum's approach to politics was based on a discussion of broad general principles. And

* Editions Albin Michel. (Paris, 1954.)

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throughout his life he believed that the reform of society must include the reform of the individuals who compose it. Indeed, the first large-scale, if fragmentary, exposition of his fundamental beliefs is to be found in the *Nouvelles Conversations de Goethe avec Eckermann* (written between 1897 and 1900, and published in collected form in 1901); and it is characteristic both of his own universal interests and, perhaps, of his estimation of himself, that he should have chosen Goethe, the universal humanist, as the figure into whose mouth he was going to put his own views about everything—society, politics, books, even sport (in 1894 he had been writing a *Critique de Sport* for the *Revue Blanche*). The *Nouvelles Conversations* do not provide a systematic exposition of Blum's beliefs, but they are full of remarks that illustrate his ideas about society, and which foreshadow his later political practice—so much so that he was glad for the book to be republished in 1937, when he was Prime Minister. His belief in human progress and the necessity of making the best of existing society is coupled with a belief that "results of exceptional importance have never been won by a regular and peaceful process of evolution. . . . You must have a sudden eruption of latent energy, an upheaval, the terrible *fracas* of a revolution. Of course a revolution has never blown up ground that is not already mined . . . so evolution prepares for revolution, but cannot replace it." It is a dualism that explains much of his subsequent political action.

BLUM came from a middle-class Jewish family (in spite of the rumours spread by his enemies, he was never a man of great wealth); and it is against the background of orthodox Judaism that much of his thought must be set. The *fin-de-siècle* was a moment of revolution against orthodoxy of all kinds; and the ideal of the radical lay Republic was one that appealed to Jews who had thrown off their traditional beliefs and practices just as it did to the young men who had liberated themselves from Roman Catholicism. Yet in both cases early beliefs left a permanent mark on their habits of thought. Blum never forgot that he was a Jew, even when he was urging Jews to become assimilated into the society in which they lived, and, in the *Nouvelles Conversations*, he links to his Jewish origins the desire for a new faith to replace the old: "The Jews have made a religion of Justice as the Positivists have made a religion of Facts and Renan a religion of Science. . . . The idea of inevitable justice is the only thing which has sustained and united the Jews in their long tribulations. . . . And, unlike the Christians, it is not from another existence that they expect reparation and equity. The old Jews did not believe in the immortality of the soul. It is this world . . . which must one day be ordered in accordance with Reason, and make one rule prevail over all men and give to each his due. Is this not just the spirit of socialism?"

Reading the *Nouvelles Conversations*, one can see how Blum's concern for social justice, and his desire to prepare the way for a revolutionary new order of society, led him more and more towards active politics. It was a process that aroused some criticism from his literary friends and associates of the *Revue Blanche*. André Gide, for instance, was complaining by the beginning of 1907, "Oh, if politics did not deflect his thought to such an extent, what a subtle critic he would be! But he judges people and things according to his opinions, not according to his taste. . . ."

The fact is that Blum, as a critic, was always perhaps more interested in opinions than in art for art's sake, although he remained, like Gide himself, extremely sensitive to nuances of style. Indeed, for Blum it was impossible to separate the manner from the matter; lucidity of expression involved clarity of ideas, and vice versa. "One can appreciate," he wrote in praise of a work of political theory, Henry Michel's *Idée de l'Etat*, "the qualities we find most rarely in books today: an impartial consideration of ideas and respect for the true meaning of words." It was his hatred of waste and untidy situations that made him write his controversial work *On Marriage*, with its attempt to provide rational utilitarian criteria for relations between men and women. And this freedom from illusions (which made him a devotee of Stendhal) remained a feature of his political life. Sometimes it made him appear doctrinaire and uncompromising, as, for instance, in the 1920's, when he repeatedly refused to join coalition governments, because he believed that the socialist party would, in such circumstances, be powerless to achieve any of its programme. Sometimes on the other hand, this refusal to ignore difficulties or underestimate problems, this intellectual ability clearly to foresee consequences, made him seem, to some of his critics, surprisingly pliable.

IT WAS Blum's optimism, his belief in reason, his passion for justice that had led him into politics. The teaching and example of Jean Jaurès, the Dreyfus case, the growing concern with social problems and the analysis of society, all these were influences which had been felt by many of Blum's generation; and perhaps, had it not been for the murder of Jaurès and the

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First World War, Blum might have remained a lawyer and *homme de lettres* with political leanings, instead of becoming an active politician. By 1914, he was actively "*engagé*" emotionally and intellectually, but he had not yet launched on a political career. However, during the war he had his first experience of the working of government, as *chef de cabinet* to Marcel Sembat, the Socialist Minister of Public Works (his eyesight was too bad for him to serve in the army), and he became very interested in problems of administration. In the elections of 1919, at the age of forty-seven, he was elected to the Chamber, at the moment when the French Socialist Party was going through a major crisis. No new leader had emerged to take the place of Jaurès, assassinated on the eve of war; the older generation was dying off; many of the younger militants were turning towards direct revolutionary action, and, immediately after the war, the party was split over the question of joining the Third International. It was in this party strife that Blum emerged as leader, and it was he who was faced with the task of reconstructing the party after the break with the Communists at the Party Congress at Tours in 1920, a break in which the Communists had succeeded in taking with them the party newspaper, the party offices, and the party funds. The circumstances in which Blum became the leader of the Socialist Party and the rapidity of his rise are important when one comes to judge his career as a political leader. On the one hand, he was very anxious to see the working-class political movement reunited again; on the other, he knew from first-hand experience on several occasions what co-operation with the Communists involved. Blum's success or failure to put into practice his ideals of social justice must be judged in the light of the conditions of his rise to a position of authority.

The most remarkable thing about his political career was the way in which Blum became a working-class leader without giving up the way of thinking (or, for that matter, the appearance and manner) of an intellectual. Day after day in *Le Populaire* the reasons for his political actions were explained and discussed, and the intellectual grounds for them made clear. Like Gladstone, Blum was prepared to treat the rank and file of his supporters as rational human beings who would respond to rational intellectual and moral arguments. His honesty and disinterestedness, even if they sometimes inhibited action, yet gave Blum his strength. And it was these qualities that enabled him to pursue the difficult course he had set himself, that of building up a Socialist Party that would be independent both of the Communists and of the bourgeois parties. It is Blum's position in the 1920's that has gained him the reputation of an ineffectual doctrinaire,* just as it is his conduct in 1936–7 that has led to his being attacked as an over-sinister intellectual selling out the working class for the salvation of his own soul.† Neither of these judgments takes into account the situation in which Blum found himself, or his own principles and temperament. In the 1920's he was concerned with reconstructing the socialist movement, the "*vieille maison*" for which he had appealed so eloquently in his speech at the Tours congress. This necessitated a delicate balance between the danger of allowing the revolutionary initiative and glamour to pass to the Communists, and that of allowing the Socialist Party to become yet another opportunist group bargaining for portfolios in a succession of coalition governments. "Non-participation," which became the doctrine of the Socialist Party up to 1936, and which cost it some of its ablest members, was not just a Marxist dogma—although it was sometimes presented as such, even by Blum himself; it was part of an attempt to build up a revolutionary party which would one day be able to take over power and launch the social revolution. Thus Blum declined, on two occasions, invitations from Herriot and Briand to take part in Radical-led governments, though giving them support in the Chamber. One or two socialist ministers in a non-socialist government would be as powerless to introduce a socialist programme as Millerand (a ghost as potent in the French Socialist Party as Ramsay Macdonald in the British Labour Party) had been twenty-five years earlier. It was perhaps a decision that deprived Léon Blum of many opportunities for effective, if limited, political and administrative reforms: and there was one side of him that would have responded eagerly to the practical administrative problems of government. He had, in 1918, written a book on Governmental Reform, based on his own experience of wartime administration—calling for a cabinet secretariat on the English lines (a reform which had to wait until after the Second World War), a regrouping of ministerial powers, and so on; and his interventions in the Chamber on points of practical detail were often impressive and sensible. The result of the years of "non-participation" was that when Blum did take office, there was little opportunity for these practical reforms of the administrative machinery, since he was necessarily more concerned with the first steps of a long overdue

* Cf. e.g. Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *De Karl Marx à Léon Blum*. (Geneva, 1954.)

† Cf. e.g. Colette Audry, *Léon Blum ou la politique du Juste*. (Paris, 1955.)

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social revolution. On the other hand, there is no doubt that these years of self-imposed abstention from office were the years in which the Socialist Party recovered from the effects of the split in 1920: membership increased steadily; the parliamentary party continued to win votes in elections; and the Communists did not succeed in gaining control of more than a small part of the trade union movement.

WHEN Blum finally accepted office in 1936, swept into power by the success of the Popular Front of Radicals, Socialists, and Communists in the elections held in April, he was under no illusions about what he could do; "Exercise of power within the framework of capitalist society is one thing. Revolutionary conquest of power is another." Or, again, "*Nous ne sommes pas des ministres socialistes, nous sommes des socialistes ministres.*" Perhaps, however, the actual achievements of the Popular Front government have been underestimated, the more so as subsequent discussions have inevitably concentrated on how far Blum and his ministers were to blame for the disaster of 1940. Yet, in spite of all that has happened in the last twenty years, the lot of the French working class could never be quite as bad again as it was before Blum took office; achievements such as paid holidays, the acceptance of principles such as those of the legal minimum wage or the forty-hour week, even if subsequently temporarily abandoned, at least made possible new advances. Léon Blum had to justify his conduct of affairs on two occasions—before the Vichy court at Riom and before the more sympathetic, but not wholly uncritical, parliamentary commission of enquiry in 1947, which examined the course of events in France from 1930 to 1945. On the whole he was successful in answering his critics, and able to show that the failure of the French rearmament programme was more the fault of the generals than of the politicians. In fact, this particular aspect of the collapse of the Third Republic is only part of France's general decline and inability to adapt her economic and social structure to the 20th century. As Blum himself wrote, "The execution of a rearmament programme, itself conceived by the senior officers of the Staff with too little inventiveness or boldness, revealed almost at once the mean scale of our installations, the insufficiency or obsolete nature of our tools, the dearth of specialists, whom technical education or a well-conceived system of apprenticeship ought to have supplied in profusion in a country like ours. . . ."

Still, it would be silly to maintain that the Blum government was a success, or that Blum had the chance to do himself justice as Prime Minister; but this is as much a reflection on French political life as on the man. Moreover, he took office at a time when both the international situation and the financial position at home were at their most difficult. On the one hand there was a popular demand, demonstrated vividly by the series of stay-in strikes in June 1936, to turn the electoral programme into the reality of a true social reform; and the Communists were quick to attack any hesitation as a betrayal. On the other hand, the Spanish Civil War introduced a gratuitous complication into an already difficult situation. Léon Blum, both at the time and subsequently, has been more criticised by his own supporters for his handling of the Spanish situation than for any other action of his political career. Yet a study of the origins of the policy of non-intervention shows how Blum was actuated, not by timidity (it is indeed hard to find any moment of his life when he showed either moral or physical cowardice), or by the pressure of his Radical colleagues, but by his great sensibility as to the effect on others of his actions.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, Blum, who had been Prime Minister for some two months, and was embarking on an extensive programme of social reform, immediately gave instructions for the despatch of war material to the Spanish Republican government. When this became known (and much of the detail seems to have been given to the right-wing press by members of the Spanish Embassy in Paris who sympathised with Franco), there was a major political row, and the Radical supporters of the French government were openly hostile to Blum's move. ("*Je t'en prie, mon petit,*" M. Herriot characteristically said to Blum, "*ne vas pas te fourrer là-dedans.*") Blum's immediate reaction was to take a stand on what seemed to him a matter of principle, and, if necessary, to accept defeat in Parliament on the question—although this would mean abandoning his social reforms at a critical moment. He has since been much criticised—even by some of his admirers* —for not following this course, and for allowing himself to be caught up in the toils of non-intervention. It is true that there were in fact strong reasons for not intervening in Spain—British pressure and a real fear of civil war in France; but these were not what led to Blum's decision not to risk almost certain parliamentary defeat on the question of help to Spain. What seems to have decided him were the arguments, and, indeed, the tears, of Fernando de los Rios, the representative of the Spanish government in

* Cf. e.g. Etienne Weill-Raynal, *Un livre de Colette Audry* in *Revue Socialiste* 91, November 1955.

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Paris, who said that the fall of the Popular Front Government in France would be a far worse blow to the Spanish Popular Front Government than the loss of some material assistance. If the Spanish government were left to defeat the rebellion, they could still do so as long as their opponents were also unaided. And thereupon Blum embarked on the policy of non-intervention which was to earn him so many reproaches. However mistaken Blum's Spanish policy may have turned out to be—and this is not the place to trace its development—his decision to adopt the course of non-intervention was not the act of a cowardly opportunist, nor of a man who placed his own personal integrity above his political aims. It was the act of a man open to argument, aware of difficulties and, above all, sensitive to the effects his policy would have on others.

LÉON BLUM has also been criticised for the silence he stubbornly maintained during the debates at Vichy in the summer of 1940, when Laval disposed of the Third Republic. Here again, as in the case of his Spanish policy in 1936, it can be argued that Blum was not acting from cowardice or intellectual arrogance, but from a fear of becoming a burden to his own supporters. "Was I not already," he says in the fragmentary *Mémoires*,* written in prison a few months later, "a source of embarrassment as well as a subject of anxiety for many of my political friends, perhaps without their being clearly aware of it. . . . I wondered whether the unpopularity which was growing up round my name had not already made my actions sterile—even harmful—to the ideas I should have liked to support, to the companions who had defended them. To feel oneself not only a heavy or a dead weight which, thrown into the scales adds to the balance on the enemy side; to be aware that one's presence and words discredit what one wants most passionately to serve, these are cruel impressions, and they started to take possession of me." Few politicians in a democracy have been so hated as Blum was by his opponents (although the more respectable of them, like Poincaré, learnt to appreciate his honesty); even President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who inspired something of the same feeling among men of property, was never subject to quite such virulent personal attacks, which did not stop short of physical violence. Blum, as a Jew, a Socialist, and a free-thinking intellectual, was an obvious scapegoat in the moment of defeat and panic. Yet he did not attempt to leave France, and, to the surprise of his enemies, he appeared at Vichy, where he tried vainly, behind the scenes, to make a last effort to rally the Socialist Party against Laval. Then began the years of prison.

They were years which Blum spent in writing and reflecting, as well as preparing the defence of his policy. (His statements at the Riom trial have now been reprinted and show with what skill and eloquence Blum was at the same time able to justify his own political conduct and discredit that of his accusers—so much so that they were obliged to abandon the whole pretence of a trial.) It is interesting to see how, old and apparently defeated, Blum turned again to examining his basic assumptions about politics and society, as well as his own past conduct. Certain ideas, and even phrases, from his youth still haunt his memory and provide a key to his deepest convictions. Above all it is the idea of justice that recurs again and again—justice in the sense of the rule of law and the safeguard of individual liberty, and justice in the sense of a fair distribution of economic benefits and opportunities. "The human race has created knowledge, science, and art. Why should it be powerless to create justice?" And Blum repeats word for word in *A l'Echelle Humaine*, written in 1941, a phrase he used in the *Nouvelles Conversations de Goethe avec Eckermann*, written forty years earlier: "For a worker to rise to be a bourgeois is a miracle; for a bourgeois to sink to manual labour is a tragedy." It was because the French bourgeoisie had shown itself incapable of putting an end to this inequality, and had lacked the vision and initiative to convert French society into a real social democracy that it had also shown itself unable to meet the German assault, spiritually as well as materially.

Yet Blum refused to despair. Because parliamentary government had apparently failed in France, there was no need to condemn democracy, still less to adopt Fascism. "Suppose that the German or the Italian state had been modelled on our unfortunate democracy which people today denounce with so much arrogant contempt, would not the peace of Europe have been sure and lasting?" And, in 1944, when the end was in sight, though Blum's personal fate was still uncertain, he wrote, "I do not believe in races made up of the fallen and the damned. I do not believe it any more of the Germans than of the Jews. . . . A very slight shift in circumstances is enough to revive the brute in man, in every man. But I am all the same convinced, and herein lies my fundamental optimism, that men—all men—are susceptible to a cure made up of kindness and reason, firmness and confidence, that there exists in them, alongside the age-old savagery, a sense of fraternity which can also be revived by acting at the same time on their sentiments and on their interests. . . ." It may be that this view is too easy to take. Some

* *L'Œuvre de Léon Blum*, Vol. II. (Paris, 1955.)

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thirty-five years earlier André Gide had complained that Blum, in his book on Marriage, "misunderstood completely the value of resignation and constraint, and implies—and this is monstrous—that the tree never produces as much or as fine fruit as in its natural state." The charge of underestimating original sin and trusting too much in the natural goodness of man is one that is constantly levelled at liberals and rationalists. However, if Léon Blum was sustained by his belief in man's fundamental goodness at one moment, he was appalled by man's wickedness the next. "You are already conquerors in this respect," he says of the Germans in February 1945. "You have ended by communicating to the whole world your hatred and your cruelty." Hitler was, in fact, that Mephistopheles imagined by Blum when, in the *Nouvelles Conversations*, he makes Goethe plan a Third Faust in which the tempter is "that pernicious influence which by imperceptible deviations distorts and perverts all actions."

WHEN Blum returned to France in 1945, it was as an elder statesman, respected, after his behaviour in the war years, even by his opponents. His sincerity, his disinterestedness, and his serenity had won their reward. Yet, although his advice was often important (it was largely his influence which stopped M. Mollet leading the party into a common front with the Communists in 1946–7), the rôle of a "consultant specialist to whom serious cases are submitted" was not one in which he felt entirely at ease. The Fourth Republic might have benefited had his mark on it been a more positive one.

The career of a man who never quite achieved what he hoped or what his talents might have led him to accomplish is always hard to assess. Blum was not a wholly successful politician; nor was he a really original thinker. But the story of his life is a fascinating one (especially to Englishmen, for a comparable phenomenon here is unthinkable; one has only to think of Sir Beverley Baxter, our only politician-dramatic critic), not only because of the intellectual and moral consistency that turned the young æsthete of the nineties, devoting his life to the theatre and literature, into the elder statesman, imprisoned by his countrymen and handed over by them to the Germans, but also because it is a remarkable example of an intellectual in politics, of a man, that is to say, who preserved in the hurly-burly of political life, the intellectual and moral standards of his earlier years. Thus one can say of him, as he said of Victor Hugo: "*L'œuvre . . . se divise en deux parts, dont la première est belle dans la mesure où elle fait pressentir la seconde.*" The æsthetic humanism of his youth preserved Blum from the aridity of doctrinaire Marxism (though there is a touch of this in some of his writings and speeches of the 1920's when he had to compete with the Communists at their own game). But his real attitude to Marx is summed up in *A l'Echelle Humaine*: "I ask myself after so many years devoted to action, after so many months of scrupulous meditation: is it (the defeat and failure) not the fault of the leaders whom the working class had chosen? Did they really understand their mission? Did they grasp sufficiently the meaning of the attempt by which Jaurès transformed Marxist deduction? Marx had given the most tonic and powerful reinforcement to the working class in their struggle; I mean the conviction that historical fate was working for them. But what is determined by fate does not necessarily satisfy critical reason and moral consciousness. Jaurès then showed that the social revolution is not only the inevitable consequence of economic development but would be at the same time the goal of the eternal demands of reason and of the human conscience." This is a harder belief to put into practice than a determinist and materialist doctrine interpreted by a rigidly disciplined political party. Léon Blum at least showed that it was a belief that could inspire personal and political action of a courage and honesty rare in the 20th century.

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Stephen Spender

Engaged in Writing

A Short Novel

WHEN HE got out of the train on to the covered-over platform of the railway station at Venice, he heard the rain stroking the roof through the darkness. Carrying his suit-case, Olim Asphalt left the station and walked across a wide road or square of cars and buses, all at their terminus. At this backyard, wheeled things come full stop before the looking-glass wheel-less world of Venice. As he stood on the jetty—just across this yard—waiting for the vaporetto, he put down his suit-case and glanced at his watch. He was late for the banquet which would precede the week-long East-West Conference of European intellectuals organised in Easter Week of March 1956 by Dr. Bonvolio, head of EUROPLUME.

From the deck of the vaporetto, Venice seemed less dream than gleaming black-and-white-misted cinematography. The façades of palaces were ghostly shadows on transparent gelatinous negative. At every crossing of waters, the tall vertical ends of carved stone buildings were like the two sides of a stage which suspended between them a screen of mist. The slapping of waters and the groaning of the rope fixed to a pier where the vaporetto halted were small squeaks in the European storm which swept up the marble junk of Venice into this little corner of the Adriatic.

Coming from Paris, headquarters of LITUNO, which he was to represent at the Conference, Olim Asphalt had endured a waking nightmare all night in the *wagon lit*, during which he had re-read Krushchev's famous speech to the Twentieth Party Congress (as much of it as was then reported in the newspapers) made only a few days previously. The train raced through wide darkness laid open to tortured political prisoners, deported populations, slave labourers, victims. Like a mediæval wood-cut of the Dance of Death, Europe was jigged over by near-skeletons; white skins, brown skins, no-skins, victims of thirty years of modern tyranny. Bones showed through bodies, blood poured out of orifices. Shot down, gassed, burned in ovens, driven out half-naked across freezing and burning landscapes, packed and canned in trucks of doomed trains.

He could not be at the centre of reality—

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he thought, or, perhaps, rationalised, recapitulating his waking nightmare—he could not even imagine it with any force, for longer than a few disturbing moments.

To understand our most significant history was to be annihilated by it. To exist, improvising happiness from day to day, and postponing doom, was to ignore events that happened just over the ring of the horizon and behave as if they were inconceivable (which, indeed, they were). And so he forgot the nightmare of awareness, and had sunk back into his customary dreamy waking. Now he stood on the deck of the vaporetto contemplating agreeable aspects of representing LITUNO, the literary and cultural, suborgan—some said an operable appendix—of the United Nations. Travel allowance of fifteen dollars a day (apart from tax-free salary); most meals, presumably, provided by EUROPLUME. The only bills would be from the hotel: say, five dollars per night. This would leave ten dollars per day, or 7,000 lire, for gondolas, aperitifs, entrance to exhibitions.

To eat: *lasagne*, *scampi*, *cotolette*, *osso buco*, and soft-shell crabs from the Laguna. To meet: the *chic*-est existentialists, Sarret and Marteau, from Paris; Sereno and Longhi from Rome; Pobedin, Korovin, and Pomyalov, three Russian intellectuals, provided with labels and guarantees of the appropriate writers' organisations: Csongor Botov, novelist, poet, and essayist, from the Budapest ditto; and several others. To drink: *Soave*, *Valpolicello*, *Lachrimae Christi*, *Bardolino*, *Chianti*; he recited to himself the soft names of Italian wines. To see: all Titian's Danæ marble flesh upon her Adriatic bed of lapis lazulæ, her canals blue veins, shower of gold suns and silver moons falling upon her domes.

THE vaporetto stopped at the landing stage in front of a jetty leading straight to the main entrance of his hotel. He was late for the banquet which preceded tomorrow morning's opening session. Not waiting to go up to his room, he deposited his things with the hall porter, and ran out into the rain. A page boy accompanied him, pointing out the Hotel Stella across the piazza by the Biennale. "There is always rain nowadays, the season is ruined, it has never been like this before, it is all due to the atomic bomb"—remarks pelted by a running figure like Boreas in a Botticelli, gaily puffing zephyrs through his mind.

The piazza was one great shallow bath of rain-water. When he came to the end of the colonnade opposite San Marco, Olim turned back to look at the duomo and the campanile—floating on the surface two inches above the pavementing: a "shot" often taken by more sophisticated photographers (who sometimes catch the flat glassy mirrored image interrupted above by blurred crush-petal slightly out of focus pigeon wings. An effect impossible at night.).

But what he treasured now was water bubbling soggily up through cracks in stones. He imagined deep down the rain welling above the log-heads of ancient piles on which Venice rests, crumbling logs driven into sand, soft shell crabs, fed on dead men's eyes. Victims.

THE banquet was in a private room in the Stella: a large, bare room with faded 19th-century murals, like the back of an operatic stage set. It was now three-quarters filled by an immense round table covered with a white cloth, on which, among plates and cutlery, dead leaves and flowers were strewn. The guests, already seated in their scroll-back chairs, circumferenced an outsize sunflower disk. Waiters served from a long trestle table. Oblong beside a circle.

Olim took the empty place evidently reserved for him—six o'clock on the dial. He deduced this from his opposite, indubitably figure 12, the King Arthur of the Knights of EUROPLUME, Dr. Bonvolio, bald-headed, beaming. His skull shone through the room like the sun the sunflower follows.

Sitting to Olim's left, was his old school friend, Alex Merton. Their profiles—each might have thought—were scissored for one another by these kind of public occasions. They took it for granted that they would

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meet at conferences, congresses of "the intellectuals." "Oh, you here?" Olim said, without surprise. Alex laughed cynically, and echoed, "And you!" "How did you come?" "By train!" "Oh, by train!" "And you?" "Well, actually, I've been here some days. I've been staying with Princess Casamassima. That's why I called in. I thought perhaps I should give this an editorial or some sort of attention."

They did not pursue this obscurely competitive conversation further. Alex, having apparently scored a point, turned to his neighbour, Yves Borès, a French novelist who was also a familiar at such gatherings, on both sides of the Iron Curtain (Alex and Olim were only invited by "the West"). Olim interrupted to tell Alex Merton that it was very like "old Bonvolio," who regarded the English as in some way always sabotaging his organisation, to put them together at the table as far as possible from himself. Then he turned to his right-hand neighbour, apparently a simple peasant girl in her plain smock, her doll head stuck over with little shavings of fair curls. In front of her, on the white table-cloth, a card recorded her name, place of origin, and function; MAGDA KARINTHY (*Hongrie, interprête*). When he made some remark, she did not answer but managed to direct a sharp hostile sidelong glance at him out of her left eye. This he took to be the first breath of the bleak Eastern wind of ideology blowing from across the steppes.

Right of the interpreter, was the nuclear physicist Dunstan Curlew, his head weighed down by a heap of yellow hair; a Jason out of nuclear science, who by intensity of thinking projected from the adventures of his mind, his private golden fleece upon his head.

Just now, Dunstan Curlew's immense white face was wrinkled with the tentative experimental creased smile he put on for extra-laboratory extra-Party-political-cell occasions. Through his complex facial entanglements, his eyes were tuned in to Magda Karinthy's out-raying charm. Without moving the elaborate instrument of his gaze, Curlew did just shift his eyes to take in the late arrival, with what Olim—inclined to feelings of persecution—took to be an expression of pained surprise. Olim quickly looked in another direction, to be confronted at about two o'clock on the dial by the pear-shaped tragi-comedian's face of Sereno.

SERENO had the three Russians between him and Bonvolio, the French being to Bonvolio's right. Out of his dead-pan gaze, Sereno looked impassively at Olim, shifted his black eyes to the Russians and then to the French. He looked blankly in front of him for a few seconds, then responding again to Olim's look, his head and shoulders surged balloon-like a few inches above the table, and back again, anchored to their original position.

The movement was an immense shrug, and it communicated not only Sereno's feelings about Pobedin, Korovin, and Pomyalov—Sarret, Marteau, and Borès—but the excitement he was holding back. Ever since the famous Thaw, the renowned ex-Communist poet had pursued a cat-and-mouse game, of getting real live Communist intellectuals from behind the now lifted Iron Curtain and bringing them to the West, where he put to them ironic part-amused part-sombre questions. The voice he was playing was that of truth-will-out. And, as in tragedy, there was a comic almost farcical element in the procedure. The jack-in-the-box truth pops out; the roar of laughter is a roar of tears.

Sereno looked back across the jerking puppet-like figure of Bonvolio to the French, and Olim, understanding him, followed his direction. Already, Sereno was indicating, the French had the meeting well in hand. French would be the language spoken, French the ideas discussed, French the terminology, and French the elucidation of any un-French ideas which happened to be thrown up during the discussion. There was Sarret with his aqueous eyes behind his goggling spectacles, his gesticulating hands, the gasping movement of his mouth when he spoke, emitting each word as though it were a bubble, already explaining, entertain-

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ing, astonishing, with his segments of analysis—each produced and exhibited like a section put on a slide under a microscope. His jokes exploded like small crackers in little bursts all round him.

What specially excited the comment of Sereno's indicating eyes, was that Sarret and Marteau should appear to be on such good terms. For, as Olim who, from his centre in the Paris headquarters of LITUNO, knew, only yesterday—they had left their public —the Boulevard Saint Michel—violently divided by the Sarret–Marteau split following Krushchev's denunciation of Stalin, yet here they were, Sereno seemed to comment, shamelessly *tu-toi*-ing.

In *L'Hebdomadaire*, Marteau had pronounced that after Krushchev's revelations of twenty years of murder, torture, imprisonment on false charges, deportations, and forced labour, anti-Communists need no longer be denounced wholesale as unrelenting enemies of the proletariat. Distinctions could be made. He went so far as to coin the catch-phrase: "Amnesty of the intelligentsia." He laid down the rules of a new game which might have preoccupied the Boulevard for several months: discriminating between those "premature ex- or anti-Communists who were 'genuinely of the left' and those who were 'implicitly of the right.'" The prospect of this general intellectual exercise was upset by Sarret switching the controversy back to the familiar Sarret–Marteau ding-dong, with a stinging attack on Marteau for introducing into his politics "the spirit of cynical post-mortems." Sarret pointed out that Krushchev's admission of the errors of Stalin was no evidence that premature anti-Stalinists had been any the less pro-American bourgeois capitalist sympathisers. The anti-Communists, Sarret wrote in his review *O Tempora*, should now be contested more rigorously than before; for there was a danger of the good faith of Mr. Krushchev being used to bolster up the bad faith of "anti-proletarian bourgeois proto-anti-Stalinists." As for Marteau's idea that certain people could, before the Twentieth Congress, have been anti-Communist without being of the Right, this was precisely the fallacy that Sarret had been exposing for years. His point had always been that to be anti-Communist was by definition to be against the proletariat, that is, to aid and abet the Right; and the more successfully the anti-Communist deceived himself and others that he was "leftist," the more useful he could be to Reaction. Nothing had happened to alter the fact that, until two weeks ago, to be anti-Stalinist meant to be anti-proletarian.

And now, in spite of all this, while Sarret was talking, Marteau looked at him with an almost affectionate smile. And when they were not mutually *tu-toi*-ing, Sarret and Marteau were paying courtesies that looked at this distance, quite oriental, to the Russians. Above the snow-white-clothed table, Pobedin, Korovin, and Pomyalov seemed fixed like mountains on which famous public figures had been carved, with faces that expressed eternal benevolent attention. They were natural objects, or perhaps just living models for social realist art. Pobedin, the trotted-out romancer, whose revolutionary writing preceded the revolution, stared straight in front of him, his tired worn leathery face resembling that of some prehistoric animal, overtaken by zig-zags of evolution, still fastidiously surviving. Vassili Korovin had a different alertness: that of a boy who, never losing his innocence, has swallowed everything and alienated no one. Boris Pomyalov evidently belonged to a new generation of self-promoters rather than survivors. With his bashed-in left eye and his pugilist's nose, he had an air of being something of an intruder on literature. "If Pomyalov ever had a muse, he must have raped her," Olim murmured to Alex Merton.

The Russians, behind their barriers of language, ideology, and imperturbability were not very rewarding objects of scrutiny. Olim turned back to Magda Karinthy, but here there was still no sign of response. Feeling persecuted, he began to suspect that her coldness might be due to some ideological understanding reached with her further neighbour. Had Dunstan Curlew been talking about him? He decided to put down a

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barrage of interference on Curlew's wavelength. "Good evening," he called across Magda's form, unresponsive as an effigy. Curlew's great head swayed back a few inches, and his eyes turned Olim-wards. "Delighted to see you," Olim boomed. English, in his public school accent, sounded even to himself like a subtly aggressive language specially invented for the purpose of insulting compatriots abroad. Dunstan moved his eyes and the general direction of all his receiving lines—alerted to some new danger, some potentially "reactionary" move. "Where are you going after Venice?" Olim persisted. At this Dunstan blinked, and suddenly imparted information which seemed to tumble from him like all the coins out of a slot machine. "I have another meeting, also of intellectuals, but of scientists, to attend in Vienna." Olim had hit the jackpot.

Olim wondered whether superlative intelligence had enabled Curlew to perceive in a flash that his suspicions were foolish, or whether he had some irrational Achilles' heel of personal vanity. The idea that this completely objective observer of facts might have a weakness, fascinated him. These speculations were interrupted by a pronouncement beamed across in all directions, like instructions on a loudspeaker system in an airport, by Bonvolio. They would meet tomorrow at ten sharp at a room in the Ducal Palace specially set aside by the Commune for their labours. The banquet ended without further explanations or introductions. All the intellectuals shuffled to their feet and only stood around, in the narrow space left by the immense table, for as long as it took to get their coats.

Walking over to where they were now standing, Olim greeted Sarret, Marteau, and Sereno, whom he knew well from previous congresses. The French writers, none of whom had a word of any language except his own, nevertheless were aware of Olim Asphalt as one of *"les jeunes romanciers anglo-américains"*: Caldwell, Mitchell, Capote, Mitford, Vidal, Faulkner, Waff, Steinbeck, Greene, and Green. Sensitive to the risks of the *deuxième métier*, they saw here a case of one in whom the means of livelihood had swallowed up the primary vocation—*ce pauvre type de LITUNO*, their eyes said. They approached him as one attending the funeral of his career. He did not altogether reject their sympathy. It satisfied his self-hatred, relieved him from having to enter into long intellectual discussions in difficult French, and gave him a subterranean feeling of potential revenge. He felt that with his newly acquired lack of recognition, he had put on a cap of invisibility which enabled him to observe them unawares.

A voice said: "Am I interrupting?" and, looking round, Olim saw a late arrival. "I just got here," Csongor Botov explained.

CSONGOR BOTOV was an over-size shambling figure with grey hair stuck up all round his head like some unbrushed boy's. Olim was shocked by his having aged far more than the ten years since he had last seen Botov in Hungary, much longer than the distance from Budapest to Venice. His very last glimpse of him was, in fact, of Botov standing astride a barrel of new wine (called Badacsony—he clearly remembered), brought into the subterranean cave of the surrounding vineyards where a gathering of the liberated post-war anti-Fascist Hungarian poets and intellectuals gathered for the tasting. They had driven out from a baroque castle of the time of Maria Theresa, on the shore of Lake Balaton. The castle was once the property of a great landowner who had put himself beyond the pale of human consideration: he was suspected of Nazi sympathies. It was a duty to take over his property and fill its hundred-odd rooms with novelists and poets living and working together in communal creativeness. The Writers' Association invited Olim Asphalt, representing LITUNO, to approve and disseminate their idea of taking over the more reactionary castles, and filling them with approved left-wing intellectuals. The castellated writers wined and dined Olim, explaining as they did so that here, in their new democracy, the spirit, in all senses

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of the word, inherited the earth. They certainly had the air of consuming their freedoms, frantically almost. They were less ideological than cynical. For instance, up there on the barrel, Botov stuck his fingers into the large hole of the stopper and, waving his free arm, addressed the body of the barrel in (for Olim's benefit) broken English —"My dear, you have no idea, I'm sure, where we were last night!"

Olim reported well to LITUNO of the castellated ones. He saw that if intellectual life had to be "protected," castles in rolling scenery among vineyards compared favourably with the urban beehive offices of subsidiaries of the U.N. A few months after his visit, a notorious curtain had fallen, and he heard no more from his eloquent Hungarian colleagues, whom he liked to think of always in a Bacchic frenzy practising social- while living sur- realism. But now, confronted by this new and serious face of Botov seen, as it were, through the perspective of a gun-barrel, with its distancing distanced look, he was at a loss for anything to say. Nor did Botov add anything to his "I've got here!" He wandered shamblingly off to the door.

OLIM next sought out Sereno, standing alone by the long sad trestle table now almost denuded of plates, staring across the room with his abstract melancholy gaze. Seeing Olim, he started, as though woken from a dream. Lasting about a second, a smile flashed across his face, which then relapsed into its usual look of blankness. "It should be an interesting meeting," said Olim. Sereno looked at him as if to say that was assuming altogether too much. "It depends. It depends on whether *they* say anything." "Who?" "The Russians. Csongor Botov, that Hungarian." "Do you think they have come all this way to say nothing?" "They will say what they have been told to say. But when the time is ripe, I will have some questions to put to them." He tapped his side pocket. Then, looking back across the room as at a cast totally unfitted to play the rôles he would gladly have written for them, he said: "And Sarret. Sarret. That is a bad business." "Why?" "He will only say that there is nothing to say. And at enormous length." He sighed, and as Olim looked unsatisfied, added: "Don't you understand? That is his philosophy. The philosophy of incommunicability, which he communicates interminably. The philosophy that—since there is no deity but only a Situation—Sarret is the only person who can communicate anything. With Marteau perhaps allowed to prod him on." His smile switched quickly on and off. Then he touched Olim's sleeve. "But look. You see? Just what I had expected." What he had expected was the incursion into the room of three small, unshaved officials who had taken the Russian representatives aside into a corner. "They must be consuls, police, agents," muttered Sereno. "Excuse me, but I must protest," and he went over to Bonvolio.

"A BRIEF walk is indicated," Alex said, coming up to Olim. As they left the room, they heard Sereno saying to Bonvolio in an Italian simple as a first lesson, that all discussion would be impossible if police agents from consulates and embassies were allowed to intrude their advice on their nationals. At the door they were confronted by the bewildering spectacle of Dunstan Curlew. Thinking he was perhaps lost, and that the English would surely all be at the same hotel, Olim asked the scientist where he was staying. Curlew squinted at him with a look like a squeezed lemon, as though he were not going to give him one split atom more of information, and scurried off downstairs into the outer darkness.

Alex and Olim lingered at a convenient distance. Outside they walked directionlessly for a time through the chiarascuro of the streets, occasionally interrupted by a piazza—pale brown stage set lit by spot-lights that hung in the centre of the scene. The weather had cleared, and the soft stone blackness broken by swooping beams from street lamps, golden lines incised by edges of windows and doors, reflections from water, echoed with footsteps on pavements, murmurings, instruments, and the pizzicato laughter of seem-

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ingly ever awake children. Above their heads carved scrolls on the façades of churches stayed like spread angels' wings. They crossed a bridge alongside a concourse of canals that formed a minute intown harbour where a huddle of pitchy gondolas raised the axes of their prows. Then they walked down a wide street with shop windows bright as the lit tanks of an aquarium, containing fruit, shell fish, beads, clothing, surgical instruments, all looking like rare specimens on exhibition, museum pieces, garish and gleaming, obtained one by one with immense difficulty, from the mainland.

"Today I am fifty," said Alex, when they came to the door of a bar. "Let's go in and have a drink."

THEY WENT in. The door of the bar shut out Venice and they were in a joint that might have been in any of the States. There was a long counter with bottles and an Espresso machine, and two girls standing behind. In front lolled two Americans, G.I.'s on furlough, one black-haired, hirsute, the other ginger, freckled. They had with them a Venetian boy they called Giovanni. The dark one from time to time lunged amiably at Giovanni, who called him "Yank."

Olim and Alex sat down at one of the four tables in the bar. Alex ordered cognacs, raised his glass and said: "To your fiftieth birthday." He had the same brilliantined hair, the same accomplished glance, that had made Olim feel he was enviable, thirty-five years ago, at school.

"The obvious, banal thing about being our age is," said Olim, "that everything is different from what one had anticipated, just because one feels so much the same."

"Not quite everything, surely."

"Well, I feel young precisely in those ways in which I reckoned to feel old. For instance, I feel ripe for adventures that would have terrified me when I was twenty. Myself at twenty thought that to myself at fifty such attractions would cease to apply. Only tonight, sitting next to the interpreter—whose name, I noted, is Magda Karinthy—I felt just about qualified to spend this week with her, most of the time in a gondola, like Ernest Hemingway's colonel and his contessa."

"Whereas yourself at twenty would think that yourself at fifty would be just about ready for this platonic meeting of minds."

"Myself at twenty also says that the idea of myself at fifty with Magda at twenty-five, is slightly repulsive."

"I can put yourself at twenty right about that. He had illusions about the great. He imagined that to spend a week with "the intellectuals" would be like bathing in a Ganges of the precious life blood of master spirits. What he didn't know, you and I now do know. Milton meant to be ironic. Master spirits, by the time they've become famous, don't have any life blood, apart from what they bled into their books. Even the photographs taken of them are the precious life blood of their looks. Tape-recordings are the precious life blood of their voices."

Olim leant forward and said, with a familiar intensity that had embarrassed Alex for thirty years: "That's just it. I was thinking of this when I couldn't sleep in the *wagon lit*, after reading the Krushchev report. The moment a large public becomes interested in a writer, he ceases to be real."

"Surely, you're exaggerating a bit there," said Alex. "Whatever else one might say about Sarret—to take an instance—one can't deny that he's very real."

"No successful writer is real," Olim insisted, getting excited. "That's one thing meetings of this kind prove. If he comes from the East, his personality is government property: I suppose you'll hardly dispute that. If he comes from the West, he's property owned by his readers."

"Well, in that case he's his own private property."

"But he's not real as a person."

"Why not?"

"Because he's been swallowed up by his reputation. The doubts and questions attached to his moral being—in which a person's reality lies—have been taken over by his reputation. Every French writer has to be *angoissé*. He wears his anguish like a medal. His personal qualities cease to be good and

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bad. They are simply elements in a formula that goes into the work. Before Gide wrote *L'Immoraliste*, it was possible, in a real sense, to regard Gide himself as involved in a moral conflict which might make one decide that he was immoral. The moment *L'Immoraliste* became one of the modern French *œuvres* that everyone ought to know about, the immorality (if it was that) became a peculiar virtue attaching to that product of the work—his reputation. It's the same with Sarret. Imagine Sarret at school: a tough proposition, you'd say. A rebel, a debater, the leader of a gang. What would make him real would be the moral doubt attaching to his behaviour. It would seem to his professor at the Lycée that Master Sarret would prove himself wrong or right, by the moral choice that he finally made. But actually, what happened was that he made the choice irrelevant, by becoming a famous writer. All doubts were removed in the great dissolvent and stain remover—success."

Alex laughed, "Perhaps that's why I always read 'immortal' for 'immoral' and vice versa. A writer is like some country which contains a great many products, some good, some bad: but it manages to export the whole lot of them and thus convert good and bad, beautiful and ugly, all into some universally accepted currency—Swiss francs."

"Piu di vino! Giovanni," shouted the dark-haired G.I., seizing Giovanni's arm. Giovanni pushed him away laughing: "I no gi' you wine, Yank, if you fight me, then I know you have wine we all fight."

The ginger-complexioned one caught the arm of one of the waitresses, who then served them spumante.

"Perhaps you see now why I stopped trying to write novels."

Alex, whose attention had been diverted by the Americans, took a moment to grasp the connection of this with what Olim had been saying before. He had been looking at the dark one and the ginger one and Giovanni and the waitresses. Now he switched his amused glance, a spotlight, back to Olim. He said, without attempting to conceal the irony:

"Because you feel that through success you'd abdicate your personality?"

"More than that: I realise that I would neither be real in myself nor able to enter into the objective reality of the time. When, last night, I read the Krushchev report, I realised how right I was to give up. Reality in our time is too terrible to imagine."

"Then I take it that your position as an official of LITUNO is entirely satisfactory?" Alex asked—with his irony again.

"No, no, I'm not at all satisfied. I've just moved into a world of compromises, generalisations, and abstractions. The idea of LITUNO—that it's good for intellectuals to meet! But when they do meet, they mustn't say anything that would stop them meeting in future. And as an official of LITUNO I'm not allowed to say anything, because, naturally enough, officials must not have opinions, which might compromise the organisation. I've come full circle. I'm back where I started. I think there is only sense in recording minute particulars which are observed or imagined, and just true, and don't fit in to any preconceived whole. If one doesn't believe this, one arrives at the position where Sarret is: his view of society is a stick he uses to beat his perceptions with. I can't be real, but I can't accept any unreal formula either."

"Where does that leave you?"

"It leaves me thinking that if one has ever written then one is always engaged by one thing—not by responsibility to society but by writing."

Suddenly Alex became serious. He looked at Olim intently. "Are you unhappy? Are you unhappy?" he repeated.

"Why don't you join us? Why don't you have fun?" asked the dark-haired G.I. "Come with us. Help us drink some of this," yelled the ginger one.

With the two girls strung, swaying, between them, showing bare elbows and thighs, they closed in, surrounded Alex and Olim with a great ring of sweaty clothes and hot flesh. But the intellectuals felt bound partly by shame, partly by something less palpable—the strain of thin drawn-out ideas, tugging at them, demanding that they rest

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tonight, give all their attention to the brain-meeting tomorrow.

"We have a meeting tomorrow. We've got work. We have to go," said Olim.

Out in the street, he looked back at the shut door of the bar, and said: "All the same, it might have been wiser to follow them to the end of their night."

AS THEY went under the arcade leading into the piazza, they heard the voice of a youth calling "Gondola! Gondola!" "There you are," said Alex, "for you and Signorina Karinthy." "I'm not her idea, or, rather, her ideology. But still I'll remember." He looked at the gondolier, who immediately started coming hopefully towards them. He was dressed in close-fitting dark blue clothes, and his hair jutted like the peak of a cap over his forehead. "Gondola! Gondola!" he said. They explained that they could not go out tonight. He told them he was here every evening at the same hour.

After the cell meeting, Csongor Botov had walked by himself for an hour along the sides of canals, over bridges, into little piazzas, trying to recapture something that he had lost. Gazing across the great empty square at San Marco, he heard the same voice call "Gondola! Gondola!"

Walking shamblingly up to him, he turned towards the boy his heavy face of unfathomable profundity. *"Gondola! Gondola!"* the boy chirped rapidly, like a cicada. Botov shook his head. The night. The canals, dark passages leading into deeper darkness. Leading under ground. The great cold space of the shadowy Laguna. *"Troppo freddo questa notte."* Besides, it might rain. Lifting his head up to the sky the stars seemed moving chips of misted light. The boy saw what he was thinking. "No, no. It will not rain. Everything's changed. The good weather will last. At least till Easter." "Tomorrow. I'll come back tomorrow. At the same time," Botov said, turning away heavily. The boy looked after him, but did not follow. This reassured Botov. He actually came back, walked up to the boy once more and looked at him silently. *"Gondola! Gondola!"* the boy was all ready, started moving in the direction of his boat. Botov shook his head and repeated, "Too late. Tomorrow." Then without smiling but with a kind of imploring curiosity he inquired: "Your name?" "My name? Carlino...." He added that he was always here, would always take him out, was always ready, etc. "I wanted to have your name," Botov said, and then with the scruple of a poet, "I mean, I wanted you to have a name. Carlino," he repeated, and this time when he had gone, did not come back.

II

AT TEN the next morning the intellectuals of East and West walked up the great white marble Staircase of the Giants, in the courtyard of the Doges' Palace. Olim lingered, watching them trail up the steps. From below, he got a perspective in which the drab coats and macintoshes, the faces like bunions, the limbs like carrots, of the intellectuals were silhouetted against the thighs and stomachs, strong yet reposeful, of helmeted Mars, and Neptune with his curled marble beard blown to one side by a wind that was a chisel. The dim procession of macintoshed moderns with the marble figures towering above them, looked as though they were going to enter a hall where the Past had set up an inquisition to examine why they dressed as they did, looked as they did, thought as they did.

At the top of the stairs, in the gallery under the arcade, he turned and looked down at the back of Mars, weather-stained, with apple buttocks separate-looking from the rest of the figure, streaked and pale as the milk-white silky testicles of the bull that raped Europa.

Then, looking up from below, he saw—a last comer again—Csongor Botov. Botov's long, untidy hair had been shoved distraughtly, rather than brushed, across his head, to one side. At first Olim thought it was this, together with the deep incised lines of his forehead, which gave him—in such contrast with the other intellectuals—the look of the Neptune above, with beard hewn to one side. Then, following the direction of his eyes, he saw that Botov was looking at the

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Neptune—with that gaze which was like an inhalation, a great, deep inbreathing of the sight.

The reunion was in a room not open to the public. Dark, it contained a dull, stained magistrates' bench under a vast painting of armoured warriors leaning on spears in company of naked gods and goddesses. They surrounded two helmeted leaders, ceremoniously clasping hands. Called The Reconciliation, this allegory celebrated a peaceable meeting of Byzantines and Venetians.

The room, perhaps at one time a place where penalties were imposed, seemed something intermediate between the most splendid chambers and the worst dungeons.

In poses that hardly imitated the indolent heroes in the mural, the intellectuals stood around, looking at one another. Each recognised in the others, faces of intellectual power, genius even, but not youth or novelty. The youngest delegate must have been nearer forty than thirty. The unstated qualification for being here was familiarity with the terms of a debate which had gone on for the past twenty-five years, about the ideas of the Left. There was something about the assembly of an Old Boys' meeting of seminarists, who had passed a lifetime finding and losing their faiths, of "clerks" who hovered for ever on the controversial verge dividing loyalty from betrayal. They seemed a much fingered greasy pack of cards, with Sarret's squat figure, faces at both ends, king of trumps.

Apart from the ideas involved, the nagging altercations, there was curiosity about those who were not there, colleagues shot down escaping or who had joined some side everyone agreed to be worse than the several shades of rightness and wrongness that qualified each here for all the others.

TO OPEN the proceedings, an educative Minister, specially imported to welcome intellectuals, made a speech. Rincontro—for that was his appropriate name—had an oval, wide-open face, swept somewhat bare by public virtues, but nevertheless garnished with some amiable Italian trimmings. He spoke of Venice as a symbol of East-West union—and in the scrolled Italian tongue scooped out by curving flourishes of his fat little hands—he seemed to hew words in commemorative lettering based on some fine Renaissance calligraphy:

Venetia extends her welcome to the delegates of Eastern and Western worlds—and in doing so she, the jewel on the shoulder of the Adriatic sleeve, finds nothing unfamiliar—for her rôle has ever been the union of Latinium and Byzantium.

In her, East and West have been transformed within the exalted synthesis of Art —and Intellect is not foreign to her either—the very stones of this palace and every pillar and column of St. Mark's celebrate such an union.

To make the earliest mosaics which in their primitive abstract gold stiffness adorn the Baptistry, artists were brought from Byzantium; and to each Byzantine was attached two young Venetians who soon learned from the East that skill which became a new form of expression for the West——

He had raised his hands as though releasing pigeons; and indeed his theme almost flew out of the window, across the courtyard to the Duomo, and back several hundred years. Then he had a gesture of revolving his outstretched hand as though to call the fliers home into the room, and he resolved Twelfth century Byzantines and Venetians into a metaphor of our times. It creaked rather, Olim thought.

EUROPLUME, which has its seat in Venice, has brought here in this great conference of the intellectuals representatives of the two parts of our divided world, who will sit together at this table, making their mosaic —the picture of a world where ideas meet and dwell together in harmony. I, a Venetian, sitting at this table, will listen to their ideas and hope to learn their skill so that Venice may become the image-creating centre of harmony in a divided century.

He raised his arms in a salutation, a blessing, almost episcopal. The ingratiated applause had scarcely died down than Bonvolio jumped up, eyes shining behind shining spec-

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tacles. Here was a man with a mission. They had been brought here—he left no doubt—to be converted to the Bonvolio Doctrine, or the Instrument of EUROPLUME.

BONVOLIO knew he was dealing with logicians, so he surrounded the centre of his thought with an elaborate carven gilded frame of logic bristling with "preciselys" and "concretelys."

"I wish to make clear very precisely and in the most concrete way possible," he began, "that our programme here is to have no programme. Certain of you may have objection to this programme—or, you may say, this lack of programme. But the aim of this meeting is, simply and exactly, to arrange another meeting. And for the purpose of that other meeting what we have to discuss is whether we can meet and, if so, precisely what discuss. In order to discover this, it seems best that we should examine ideas of a general order, to discover what grounds we may have of agreement, or, if I may so put it, of our agreement to disagree.

"What I am laying before you now, is, if I may use the expression, the Philosophy of EUROPLUME, which is in turn, if I may be personal, my own philosophy, *Bonvolismus*, for like our friend M. Sarret, who is here among us, I feel entitled to a philosophy. *Bonvolismus* or the philosophy of EUROPLUME, is that whoever meets within the terms of EUROPLUME does, precisely, agree to meet. Therefore each one of us represents this agreeing to meet more than any other cause which might possibly imply disagreement. Everyone here accepts the Concept of the Dialogue."

Waving his arms and jerking his head occasionally to take a rapid glance at his prospective critics, Sarret, Marteau, and Sereno, Bonvolio looked not unlike the conductor of an orchestra. Nor would this metaphor have struck him as less than apt. For was he not conducting the International Symphony of Harmonious Cultures? His nod in the direction of Sarret or Marteau or Korovin was that of the conductor who encourages a drum here or suppresses a piccolo there. He now burst into his coda:

"Because we are as VOICES within the HARMONY of EUROPLUME, we enter into another, a transcendent kind of politics—what I call Secondary Politics—the politics of the man of culture, defending his position as man of culture—against every other kind of politics, against precisely what I term Primary and External Politics. He may well make alliances with External or Primary Politics but only for the sake of the Secondary and Interior Politics of Culture."

He went redder than those unaccustomed to him would have thought possible, waved his arms still more, and started shouting at the top of his voice:

"Precisely for the reasons I have given, the Intellectual, the Man of Letters, has to be IN public life, IN politics, the politics that are FOR or AGAINST us. In my Thought the Non-Political has no meaning. Today, I say, it is the first duty of every intellectual to be PUBLIC. Everything else comes after that, because everything else depends on it!"

There was a hush. The Russians, to whom all this was translated by Magda Karinthy, gazed ahead of them non-committally. Across the table they had a remote staring air, like a range of mountains viewed from a distance. Alex Merton looked intently down at a sheet of paper on which he had done a miniscular drawing. Dunstan Curlew's head seemed weighed down under the burden of confusion actually penetrating his brain cells and causing him physical pain, Sereno's face expressed the nothing which was a very great deal, the other Italians looked as if, brought up on Croce, they were able to cope with this kind of thing. Csongor Botov appeared to be cutting his initials in the table with a pen. Borès, the most earnest of the French delegates, had reduced Bonvolio's thoughts to two neat columns of notes.

Sarret turned to Marteau and appeared to utter what looked like an exclamation of wordless astonishment enclosed in a bubble of air that floated, outlined in light, to the ceiling. Marteau laughed and whispered *"Chut!"*

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THEN SERENO heaved a sigh which seemed to convey that since no one else would undertake the task, he must begin constructing foundations on which to build from bricks that Bonvolio had let fall. "We are certainly very recognisant—recognisant," he repeated, "of the Chairman's suggestion that there should be no fixed programme——" With a movement suggestive of deftly picking up a brick, he went on: "I myself appreciate fully the importance of giving a good deal of time to exchanging theoretical points of view, because there has been a rift, yes, a rift. In consequence of the separation which has lasted so many years we might well discover that we are using the same terms and applying the same concepts with an entirely different meaning, according to whether we come from East or West."

Here he paused, and seemed even to have finished, but just as Borès put up a finger like a pencil preparatory to making some minute tick or underlining, Sereno uttered the single word "Thaw"—*"dégel."* "What we most want to hear from *Them*, our Soviet friends, is the effect on their lives as writers of the Thaw, if this term is recognised by them." When he said this, his eyes seemed to become detached from the words he was using, as though they looked across them to the reaction that one phrase—the Thaw—produced.

He fell silent, looking up at the ceiling.

BORÈS jabbed the air again, and took up his notes. The appeal to be practical had not, in his case, fallen on deaf ears. He had taken the journey to Congresses on a couple of books on the Resistance in the Mountains, and a great many articles. He still had the narrow-scale eagle glance of the Guide, and, if one was romantic, one could imagine him throwing all this stuffy air up and going back to his hills. His constructive rôle was to show the way up peaks indicated by Bonvolio, who said: "Excelsior!" What was necessary, Borès ardently said, was "to define our terms. Unless we know what we are talking about, we shall not know what we are talking about. To begin with, we ought to know what we mean by the word Culture. If we define our terms we shall measure the gulf between us, and perhaps, throw across it a rope."

To be practical or not to be practical; to define or not to define; to use terms or not to use them; to have a programme or to have none; the discussion proceeded like a hitting of balls from one side to the other.

The Russians began to show signs of discontent. There was an apprehensive feeling that they thought all this talk Western decadence. There was a stirring among them, like breezes moving in boughs of pine trees. They talked with one another in low voices, occasionally studying reports on the progress of the discussion handed to them by Magda Karinthy. Finally, after the third or fourth intervention by Borès, Pobedin put up his hand, and produced an attentive silence. Leaning forward, and gazing across the table as though he were the first of them to sight the Grail, he spoke earnestly and slowly, pausing at the end of each sentence to let Magda Karinthy interpret his words. Pobedin said that he and his colleagues believed in cultural exchanges, exchanges of points of view, exchanges of personalities, exchanges of works, "in every possible manner and way." Nowhere would such exchanges be undertaken more favourably than in Venice which, if not the mother, was at any rate the elder sister of European culture. "Culture," he said impressively, "leads to communion between men, and to mutual respect between man and society."

Sereno gazed at Pobedin's distinguished grey head of hair, his expressive eyes in his totally inexpressive face, contemplated this Lazarus come back from the dead of Stalin, to say with a sepulchral solemnity: Culture leads to communion between men, and to mutual respect between man and society.

Bonvolio was ecstatic. M. Pobedin's definition of culture—which, indeed, he repeated—was his own thought expressed with a happiness to which he could not aspire. "We are all of us agreed then"—he cried rapturously—"to integrate Pobedin's meaning with that of the rest of the meeting—that culture means communication. But if we are to know what we are communicating, we must understand

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our means of communication. Concepts, categories, backgrounds, histories, beliefs, philosophies, theories—all these we must establish in their East-West relation," he shouted, raising an arm as though pouring prodigious fruits from a cornucopia.

"SURELY," Alex Merton protested urbanely, "desirable as it may be to relate so many different terms, we ought also to eliminate. We need a clearing house as well as a Bourse."

"What terms does Mr. Merton think should be disposed of?" Botov leaning forward in his chair with a ferocious expression, positively shouted.

"Well, let me reflect. Terms, I should say, that are used by each side in exactly opposite senses. Well, let us take instances—Peace, Liberty, Democracy."

Then, appalled at the silence his words had produced, Alex went on: "Lists, lists, that's what we want. Lists of books that you know and we don't, that you don't, and we do. Names of writers you'd like us to send over for you to meet, books you'd like to read."

He leaned back while lolling one arm idly over a chair, and smiled pleasantly, humorously at Botov. The smile creased up his eyes and his expression seemed to appeal to Botov to join a club of decent chaps.

"Mr. Alex Merton flatters us over here if he imagines that we have any knowledge of names he might suggest to us," said Botov contemptuously.

"Just so, just so, that's why I made the proposal. Lists, I repeat, that's what we want, to draw up lists of what you think important and I think important and show them to one another."

Csongor Botov ignored this. He looked not at Alex Merton but at Olim Asphalt and said in a loud harsh guttural tone of voice: "We know nothing of one another. We have forgotten one another—we have been separated by a gulf not of time nor space but of impassibility. We suppose this time means nothing to you, living in your world where *plus ça change plus c'est la même chose*"—he emphasised the French with an altogether over-weighted quite embarrassing irony—"I can assure you it has been eternity for us. However, if we do meet here, we meet as men, as human beings. We cannot and should not avoid using words that appeal to man: least of all, the beautiful word Peace."

FOR THE rest of the morning they went on discussing whether or not they should use terms knowing or not knowing what they meant by them; and whether they should devote themselves to principles or what they called "concretisations." Bonvolio summed up the morning's labours by saying that their disagreements were what he called Secondary and did not matter, because the purpose of the meeting, on which they all agreed, was to discuss what they could discuss, and precisely and exactly, this is what they had been doing.

III

THAT AFTERNOON, when they had returned from luncheon (in order that there should be no escapes, the politically-conscious organisers arranged that all meals should be held in the Hotel Stella private room at the great round table), there was a feeling that the professionals must weigh in. Perhaps someone had "spoken to" Bonvolio during the interval, because he said nothing whatever, opening the meeting with a nod to Marteau.

Marteau's very appearance transformed the atmosphere from the weighted inwardness of Bonvolio-directed programme music, to cracking outdoor painterliness.

He was a speaker who combined eloquence with a kind of public intimacy. He seemed always to talk person to person. Now, he was demonstrating how he could avoid some obstacle. Now, he was making a glancing aside that caught the listener like a smile straight to the eyes. Now, he was asking a question which, though the reply was indicated, flattered the other's assumed ability to make it.

For Marteau, speaking was a demonstra-

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tion using every aid and instrument: scalpel, operating table, brushes, lantern slides. He began clearing away with a movement of his hands, pushing the morning's rubbish resolutely, gently aside. "I listened this morning to what was said with the greatest interest, but am I right in thinking that something essential was left out of the discussion?"

Then, permitting one object of discussion to remain, to be looked back at and examined: "Our good friend Sereno certainly introduced what ought to be the main topic of discussion —the Thaw. But——" here he turned and addressed a smile to a blank wall with two eyes painted on it—Sereno's face—"you made a statement when perhaps you should have asked Them"—pointing to the Russians as to triplet Ural peaks—"a question. Do they accept this term *Thaw*? And if you asked them that—might not They put the question back to you—what about *your* Thaw? Doesn't the idea of the Thaw apply to both sides? Doesn't it imply the need of a change of position for both?"

He then started painting in a large picture of what he would venture to call The Philosophy of the Thaw—a dripping canvas to set beside The Reconciliation.

There was—there had been—a long time ago—before the Russian Revolution—Marxism—different from Stalinism. Now Marxism allowed the artist or writer considerable freedom, within the system of ideas which explained and determined the rôles of almost every activity within society. Did not Marx have a conception of Greek art which exalted it almost to the sphere of absolute values?

(*They saw statues, they saw vases, absolute forms, on which a profile, a nude, a wing, shook lines with lines of Picasso.*)

And in the early stages of the Revolution, Lenin had given considerable freedom to poets.

(*Alexander Blok was allowed to trail through Leningrad twelve Red Army soldiers who turned out to be led by Christ. Mayakowsky was allowed a peep at a cloud that wore blue trousers.*)

What happened in the period called Stalinism? Marteau put aside the colours and took up his scalpel. He extracted an abstract formula from a million corpses.

> *An external rule, dictated by what its leaders conceived to be the necessities of the state, was imposed on art, and invaded the interior activity of each writer.*

Good. Accepting this principle, now let us look at the results. Poor little Soviet poet, subject of Stalin, member of the Union of Soviet Writers, criticised in *Life and Culture*, *Red Star*, and *Pravda*, ordered about by Zhdanov, six suicides behind him, his best friends sent to Labour camps: "Shall I, when I witness suffering all round me, reveal the truth of this suffering which is so striking to me that it has become my own interior truth, or shall I, out of recognition of the external needs of society (which are the component parts in the construction of a better world), deny this truth?"

Stalinism. The total pressure brought on the artist to deny his interior truth in the interests of the construction of the better society.

His argument sped easily, delightfully across crisp blue waters. The course he took was held in his eyes, on each side of his nose, strong and buoyant as a figurehead, above the mouth lifted to meet the waves. There were splashings, breaking white foam, sparkling asides. He never lost the pleasure of his course.

Marteau was overjoyed with the intellectual clarity with which he used concepts to depict a scene of history. Murders, imprisonments, deportations, thrust upon a whole population, accompanied by the demand that no one with eyes to see or ears to hear should say what he saw or heard, because to do so would be to make things more difficult for the tyrant, whose only aim was to improve conditions and make a better world.

Although Marteau believed oppression to be wrong he did not appear to doubt for one moment the good will or honest intent of the tyrant. And the reason he did not doubt these was because, for the purposes of the argument itself, he had to treat even the most appalling actions simply as the facts illus-

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trating an opponent's argument in an intellectual debate.

BUT THE air was becoming thick with the ghosts of the murdered and the suicides, those removed by the intellectual premises of Stalin. Sereno appeared to be staring at these ghosts. The Russians did not see them, because they were several pages behind in following Magda Karinthy's translation. Sarret did not see them, because he was occupied with thinking out the arguments which he was shortly to produce in answer to Marteau.

Marteau was now addressing a question to the Russians: "Would I be correct in assuming that the philosophical meaning of the Thaw is that, as a result of it, today the autonomy of the inner rules of art has been reasserted within the single work? That is the question I would like Them to answer."

Evidently they could not do so, because they had not yet caught up with the question (and Magda Karinthy was now so flustered that she began to look quite human, to Olim's eyes). So perhaps to fill in time, Marteau now began to speak of Universals, which were, he suggested, quite the fashion again. The world, it was true, was divided into two seemingly irreconcilable camps, but certain truths were probably beginning to be admitted by both sides. He pictured them as escaping from the context of one ideology and entering into that of the other, to discover themselves, apparently much to their surprise, accepted by both. Olim saw a no-man's-land between two irreconcilable armies. By night two times two equals four escapes from East to West, or from West to East, to discover itself accepted on the same terms by Marteau and Sarret on one side, the Union of Soviet Writers on the other. Beauty is truth, truth beauty, was receiving a more dubious reception in the East, when Olim awoke to discover that Marteau was entering on what seemed to be a peroration. In this he introduced an entirely new concept—that of Engagement. For just as a conjuror producing a scarf or handkerchief from his pocket reveals that it was really a bowl of goldfish or a bunch of flowers, it turned out that all the time, really, Marteau had been talking about Engagement. Did Engagement mean that the writer's duty lay in the direction of telling the truth about what he saw; or of carrying out governmental instructions which were component parts of a better future?

Bonvolio was suffering enormously, could contain himself no longer. As if choking, he cried out that after the speech they had just heard, he felt the need to clarify, to develop, to carry if need be one stage further, his own Thought. Marteau watched him with that attractive, impertinent smile which made two hollows in his cheeks, like a boy's dimples.

"Buzz, buzz, buzz." This graceless interruption, said most gracefully, came from Alex Merton. "Bees, bees," it resolved itself into. "Much too much has been said to suggest that we are all agreed that literature has to be political. Is it true? Every work does not have to take sides or even attain universality by flitting from one side to the other, in and out of different camps. For instance, the bee-loud grove and I will have a hive there, and I will have some honey, or whatever that is——"

Olim, though not allowed to speak, knew all the arguments about the literature of bees. It could encourage interest in agriculture, the production of honey; alternatively, it could be reactionary, in upholding the nostalgia of pastoral as against industrial life. Orthodox priests, in Eastern Europe, often kept bees.

JUST THEN Dunstan Curlew's great head started swaying to and fro like a pendulum. It was supported by his hands being held over his ears and pressed so close that they were a hub on which the head rocked like a cradle. At the same time he gave forth a great soft howl which, when Olim looked anxiously in his direction, translated itself into, "This is the most disorganised meeting I've ever attended." Bonvolio, huffed, called upon the scientist to make a "constructive contribution." "I hesitate to do so, not being a literary man," was Dunstan Curlew's excuse. Pressed, he doubted whether a mere nuclear physicist could contribute to such a

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poetic discussion. Well, perhaps he would speak: "Sometimes the non-expert can shed light on subjects of which he knows little or nothing." To begin with, he had to say that he thought these questionings about the social function of writers were made largely irrelevant by the state of modern knowledge. This observation opened into a kind of prelude: a terribly simple introduction to Marxist theory mixed with some scientific substance (heavy water?) to drive out all objections.

Man moves in society.

Man always has moved in society.

Man is a social force in society.

Man always has been a social force in society.

The difference between man in the past and man today is that in the past man was unaware of himself as a social force. Today he is *aware of himself as a social force.*

∴ he has no excuse for not being aware of himself as a social force.

And this blessed state of consciousness is thanks to Karl Marx.

Amen.

The self-satisfied smile of one mounting his earliest hobby horse, and finding that it still could trot, spread over Curlew's face, as he broadened his discourse to include theology. For he had begun as a seminarist, and it gave him subtle titillation to fuse the dogmas of his Jesuit training, purged of superstition, with the dogmas of dialectical materialism. "Theologians distinguish between absolute ignorance of something vitally important that you have no means of knowing, and wilful ignorance, of that which you could know if you did not will not to do so." Curlew's face had a complacent smile that showed his extreme satisfaction at hearing his lecturer's voice purring through his body, like a well-running engine. "In the future there will be no such thing as absolute ignorance of social and political responsibility. Every writer will be conscious of whether he is moving for or against the progressive development of history. But today we cannot be said to have attained that state of total permeation of consciousness of our historic duty. There is quite a lot of absolute ignorance still hanging around. All the same, we can be sure already that the idea of complete individual freedom is false, because we have knowledge of living within conflicting social forces, and therefore to refuse to act upon that knowledge is irresponsible. Our duty is to associate ourselves with the progressive forces working towards social good. . . ." Everything appeared to Curlew extremely simple. The only things that prevented the future immediately replacing the past and present, like new and better machines superseding old and bad ones, were human blindness to scientific opportunities, and the surprising difficulty of organising human beings for the better world. The latter could be corrected, however, by minor adjustments. He had a kind word for the victims of Stalin: "In future we should not allow the State to undermine Society," he said, looking grave as a bishop. This formula disposed of the errors of the past thirty years.

Now mention of the future transformed him into a visionary attacking writers precisely for their lack of vision. "The reason why, as a scientist, I feel contemporary literature is the work of lesser artists and *petits maîtres*, is that they show absolutely no awareness of a Future which opens the most wonderful prospects in history for benefiting mankind, through science. We may say, that if the world's resources were not wasted on armies and armaments, for the first time in history it would be possible to envisage all humanity benefiting without the necessity of revolution or wars." Letting himself rip, he began to describe the inventions which could change the lot of all mankind. Instead of wasteful, damp, uneconomical houses, overcold in winter, and over-hot in summer, unadapted to the physical movements of those who occupied them, science could perfect machines for living in, with rooms of perfect dimensions, walls of perfect thickness, temperatures of perfect equability, air of ever-renewed freshness, material of perpetual resilience—all attained by the experimental method of building several different types of dwelling, putting into them average families, and then measuring the needs and reactions

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of these by concealed instruments. Such houses, made mostly out of slag and rubble, would be cheap and easy to build. It was quite possible to conceive that within a generation the whole of humanity would be housed in ideal dwellings constructed from the rubble of past wasteful, ruinous, unhygienic ones. Wishing doubtless to light a flame which would inspire poets to less miserable flights, he went on to envisage improvements which could be made in communications—waterways, shipping, and aviation. Beyond the transformation of the means of living he foresaw nothing less than the improvement of the human race itself, by a cocktail mixture of hygiene, birth control, and eugenics. And standing on a pedestal, in his mind's eye dwelt an image of a woman bred part-organically, part-mechanically; tall and strong, incapable of reproduction, without feelings, but lubriciously satisfying every response psychology and physiology could, through their exhaustive researches, discover in the most exacting male.

WHEN CURLEW stopped speaking, the writers for at least ten seconds saw themselves as grubbily dwarfed under the towering and flying future as they had been by the past, when earlier in the day they had walked up the Steps of the Giants, past the figures of Mars and Neptune. The cloud passed.

During the murmuring pause that followed Curlew's speech, Olim said to Alex: "He seems to have left out Science Fiction." "Leapt out of Science Fiction, did you say?" said Alex, playing at misunderstanding—"He—a real scientist? He couldn't be!" "That's where we really are rather decadent," said Alex. "They nearly all think like he does: that the world should be their laboratory. Just think of the things they say! Just think of the women they marry!"

It was time now for the writers to play the Ace of Trumps, Sarret. Everyone seemed aware of this, and all eyes were turned to him, where he sat looking not unlike a diver, with the lenses of his glasses distorting his eyes so much that they looked like goggles behind a pair of goggles. By now the room had become so much the malleable material of the speeches that took place in it, that when he spoke it was as though the smoky, wavering atmosphere was the water inside an immense tank through which he sank, with boots that had soles of lead, and with a chain of bubbles rising from the top of his helmet. He had jumped in at a point which brought him, on the table or floor, metaphorically speaking, beside Marteau. He was back at their current subject of altercation—the Thaw (and, indeed, for Marteau and Sarret, Venice was only the extension of a Parisian café).

"Marteau," he began, in his sharp, croaking voice, "Marteau spoke of the philosophy of the Thaw. He applied, it seems to me, his systematisation in a very partial manner. The Thaw—he indicated—was pre-eminently something that happened to Them, to that half of humanity which is Communist. True, he said he wanted Them to help us correct our picture of Their thaw—but he seems to have missed what I believe to be the essential thing, that it is as impossible for us truly to thaw as it is for them to thaw."

So far this sounded like an excessive attempt to be fair—as though Sarret were one of those who believes that every evil on one side is balanced by an exactly equal evil on the other. But for him equality lay not in the balance of rights and wrongs but in the absolute impossibility of anyone on one side understanding anyone on the other, without his actually changing sides. It was the equality of negation—of absolute misunderstanding.

"Everything that has been said so far demonstrates," Sarret reiterated, "that it is as impossible for Us to Thaw in a way which enables us to understand Them as it is for Them to Thaw in a way which enables Them to understand Us."

"And if you ask me why this is so, the reason is very simple," he exclaimed, with enormous pleasure, as if he had gone through a tunnel and arrived at an enchanting point of view—his own. "The reason is that we have a Bourgeois ideology, they have a Communist one. It is therefore quite wrong to

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speak, as Marteau does, of universals that can pass from one camp into the other. They could only do so if they were transformed into the terms of the other. Everything They say comes from within the context of THEIR ideology, just as everything WE say comes out of OURS. The two points of view do not conflict even. They move in opposite directions along parallel lines."

The only exception to the rule of non-meeting was, it appeared, Sarret himself, who could, at moments, become de-bourgeoisified. He became autobiographical: "I find that—just occasionally—by an act of the will, and perhaps of the imagination—I can—for a few seconds—enter into the context of Their thinking—which is totally alien to mine—about some specific idea. When I achieve this imaginative effort of transposing myself into the other camp, then, in my view, I am making an act of Engagement. Engagement is, for me, the momentary de-bourgeoisifying of myself."

He jumped up and down in his chair, jerking his hands. In spite of his rasping voice, there was a kind of gaiety about his polemics, a certain warmth which made his logic and even his pessimism attractive.

The impetus of his own speech carried him through to what he called "the very furthest point of the problem of culture." What everyone else had "missed," was that "Each culture is also an ideology." The fact that no one else had mentioned this proved to Sarret that it must be true. Everyone else was so enclosed in ideology that he did not remark on it, any more than a fish (and Sarret really looked more than ever at the bottom of a tank) was likely to comment on the water it swam in.

Sarret was never so happy as when attacking those whose position he identified with his own. And now, with a jabbing finger, he pointed *"j'accuse"*-ingly at his fellow delegates from the West: "You," he said, "You . . . all your ideas, all your activities, all your creation, all your appreciation, all your ways of seeing and listening and witnessing are permeated with your own self-interest, conditioned by the ideology that surrounds you, just as much as those of the East are conditioned by Soviet ideology. But whereas your conditioning leads to nothing but the extension of your illusion of bourgeois freedom, theirs is a component part of the advances made by a socialist society. So what we should seek is a discussion of their ideas, with them, in the context of their Marxist ideology. We should examine how far we can understand these, while making allowance for the context of our bourgeois ideology."

WITH pieces of paper on which they wrote notes shuffled from one to another, with scratched heads and scratching pens, the Russians tried to follow the Master's justification of the water in which they swam. Finally they seemed to abandon the endeavour, withdrawing under rocks in their tank of ideological incomprehensibility.

Everyone, indeed, gave up, except Marteau, to whom these remarks seemed really addressed. *Ideological Unapproachabilities* was a parlour game the two of them played, and now it was as though they had taken over the table, across which they shoved their counters and their counter-counters. Marteau denied that he had denied that there is opposition between ideologies. "Ah! Aha! But you did mention the little matter of Universalities which passed from one camp to the other?" croaked Sarret. "I spoke of Universality to describe Universality. For example, you yourself are speaking 'universally' when you speak of the conflict of ideologies: this is an account of the current state of affairs which would be accepted by both sides." "Ah! Ah-ha! That is because I am a little bourgeois who entertains the bourgeois idea of diversity." He burst into self-mocking laughter that mocked them all.

So it went on. At moments it was interrupted by Bonvolio. "You have forgotten, gentlemen, that no one here represents an ideology coming from the outside; everything in this room is subsumed within the ideology of the Dialogue, the philosophy of EUROPLUME. EUROPLUME is precisely and concretely, a BRIDGE, not a GULF."

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BUT THEY went on and on, now not so much playing tiddlywinks or draughts, as running down the table, which had become a field, and passing the ball from one to the other. Their ideas changed from being words, into paintings, nature even, the misunderstandings of the Urals with the Alps. They discussed whether Marx was not a universal: a bourgeois reading Marx was surely entering into Communist ideology. Marteau, who had baffled Sarret with this, followed up quickly with Freud. Ah, but Freud was a clear example, said Sarret, of what he meant: he could be integrated perhaps into Communism, but not simply transported.... At this point, to Olim's vaguely translating ear, they seemed to be making speeches in blank verse, like minor lords wagging their beards against flat scenery, in an Elizabethan historic play.

Marteau

In order that Freud should be integrated
First he must be comprehended; not
Devalued with a single catch-phrase as
—Ideologically bourgeois.

Sarret

But Freud *is* bourgeois. That's a fact. And yet
He could be liberated from the bourgeoisie
And integrated into Marxism.
Now bourgeois, by its limits and negations,
Psychoanalysis could be finally freed
If it were subsumed into a totality.

Marteau

That would be transubstantiation.
In any case, you have to recognise
That Freud, though bourgeois, hit on something
Beyond theories or ideologies.

Sarret

One always can discover similarities
Of detail in opposing ideologies:
But if one such should pass into another
It has to be absorbed and integrated.
And as I've found, speaking with Communists,
This should present no final difficulty
Provided details fit their Marxist context.

Marteau

Everything's possible in conversation!
For years we've talked with Communists
Intelligent and frank in conversation.
But when it comes to other things, to actions,
Oh, how the situation changes!

Sarret

All I demand of us is this—
Instead of aiming at some coexistence
Fitting in one piece here, and there another,
As my friend Marteau seems to ask of me,
We must admit one coexistence only:
A movement of dynamic integration.

THE CARAFE on the table in front of Olim suddenly resolved itself into chains of criss-crossing diagonal lines, moving in opposing directions, ovoid, and cojoining at neck and base. Diamond shapes dazzled light emanating from its core of water. The carafe became a vision with centre and circumference, immensely complex, utterly simple, revealing, and yet tactfully withholding, innumerable reflected lights, faint shadows, conforming lines, minnow-like dartings of rainbow colour. It related mystically to the sloping spears, the gleaming armour, the vessel-shaped bodies of Mars, Venus, warriors, Venetians, Byzantines, that shone overripe through the dim background, The Reconciliation, the colour of the purplish bloom of a plum. Olim took up his pencil and tried to draw the picture in his mind, the vision of the secret relationship, connected by light moving through water, of the banal modern cut-glass carafe with the Venetian High Renaissance. The work he produced would be abstract and dry, human in its irony. It would make the carafe a comment on The Reconciliation, The Reconciliation a comment on the carafe. He toyed with the idea—which would show the influence of James Ensor on Olim Asphalt's most recent work—that the carafe might also be a crystal gazer's ball of glass, drawing to its centre distorted ape-like leering faces of the conferenciers, while the dark shadow at the base suggested a catastrophe occurring in the catacombs at the very moment when they were discussing whether they should or should not attempt to define what they meant by Culture and Engagement.

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BONVOLIO, rattled, was talking wildly. "Gentlemen, the Dialogue cannot be pursued if those present allow the discussion to be canalised into debates transferred to Venice from the *Rive Gauche*. If we go on in this way, we will find the debate becoming a series of private conferences between dissident members of the French Left, the Italian Nenniites and Morandini, the Gaitskellites and the Bevanites. There are references, there are concepts, there are names, there are topics, there are conflicts of personalities, well known to us all in Italy and France, but of little general interest here and perhaps altogether unknown to our friends from the Soviet Union." Losing grip, he splashed around wildly. "Let us admit—to take a precise and exact example—that the dodecaphonic system of musical notation does not fit into the Five Year Plan—let us be bold and admit that—all the same we can clearly and precisely envisage a Five Year Plan to the accompaniment of dodecaphonic music. After all, in Greece there was the Lydian mode, the Doric mode, in Sparta . . ."

". . . There were military fanfares," commented Sereno, who had his hands folded like a church steeple in front of his face, watchful and listening as a cliff.

"Oh yes, oh yes, there are all sorts of music! I don't deny that! And there are all sorts of links, and connections, and disputes in politics that don't concern us here. But let us return to the topic under discussion—Engagement. And then"—Bonvolio broke off with a wild inspiration—"there is censorship! Why have we not considered censorship? Every censorship is a juridical order, and as responsible intellectuals, we can't refuse a juridical order. So at this point," he cried, turning triumphantly to Marteau, to Sarret, to Curlew, to the Russians, "I agree with you. But I don't agree with *you*"—he confronted Sereno with an "at bay" expression—"because I think you imagine 'Engagement' means being on the side of victims—always. Now if we are juridically responsible individuals, this can't *always* be so. Do you ask of me that I should always be on the side of those who are defeated?" he demanded, with pathos. "Must I always support the weak against the strong?" he asked tragically. "The oppressed against the oppressors? But that is unconstructive. Constructiveness lies with the State. The State needs Culture, and Culture needs the State. We must not be completely pessimistic, Signor Sereno. No, no, we must not. We must also construct what, in the terminology of my Thought, I call The Optimism of Culture."

ENGAGEMENT. Engagement. Engagement. Putting down his pencil, and abandoning his career as post-cubist Tachiste, Olim Asphalt had taken in the word Engagement. Engagement. Damn their eyes. And now infested not by their words, but by Bonvolio's excitement and the silent rhythm of the rhetoric boxed up like an engine ticking under a bonnet in each, Olim's thoughts posed the question—What is Engagement? Engagement, he shouted inside his own head, to himself his audience, is, for a writer, *identification of soul, heart, mind, with conditions he witnesses, together with his determination to record the truth about them transformed within his art.*

Engagement. The body, that is the rub, because the flesh is weak, and cannot sustain the strong spirit. Engagement in this time is to hurl myself into battles on the side of the lesser, against the greater evil; to be starved with the starving, burned with the burning; shovelled into gas ovens and sent wandering over deserts; put in cattle trucks with the deported; driven across borders with the refugees. Engagement is to lose my freedom, and to find it again; to sacrifice my life even, and yet retain my sensibility, my nerves, my art; to be a skeleton, a cinder, yet to witness and create.

Engagement! He boiled, he burned, he felt hungry and parched. For an authentic moment, he really felt engaged. (But, of course, he was just sitting here; he wasn't.) If one were engaged in writing here, for example. How could one be engaged to describe this scene, describe these shadow men sitting round this table?

Silent, roaring with his own secret howl-

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ing, not allowed by LITUNO to speak, he glowered maliciously round him. What was he looking for? One would have to discover, one would have to invent some point of individual sensibility, one of us here, connected electrically with that world of the damned: a pure receiver of that reality. Tormented, destroyed, terrified, conscious, and in the centre of his abjectness, heroically full of creation.

THE FACT that Olim Asphalt was thinking these thoughts, did not prevent the discussion continuing relentlessly with occasional halts for taking on new passengers, putting baggage aboard, like the *vaporetto*.

It was now concerned with a question of conscience brought up by M. Borès. Should he—or shouldn't he? Should he, if moved by a public injustice, remain silent, in order to preserve his æsthetic purity, his grave integrity as artist and mountaineer, or should he protest and thus, in fulfilling a moral obligation, lose his detachment? Alex Merton said that if he did not wish to compromise his art (the question of what Borès' art was, he did not go into) his protest should take the form of a letter to the newspapers which he need not consider as part of his *œuvre*. In England, there was a newspaper, *The Times*, which existed for the purpose of publishing such letters. If, however, he felt so passionately about the public cause that he could identify it with his deepest personal feelings, then probably his protest would transcend itself in art. Sarret considered that there was an essential borderline dividing art from journalism, and journalism from propaganda: in his own case, public passion often produced his best work.

THEN THE French philosophers with the ball at their feet, were back again on their favourite topic—Engagement. It began to sound like the preliminary to marriage, though they would have treated marriage with less reverence. Marteau said that Balzac was engaged (had he ever married? Olim could not remember). Sarret said that André Gide had objected to Engagement. This sounded in character. Had Proust ever been engaged? Unlikely. In a sense perhaps, yes.

Sarret recalled the request made to Chinese writers while he was in Pekin—write stories for children. He posed the question to Marteau (the meeting had come to resemble a broadcast dialogue between them, with the others a studio audience invited in to listen and applaud)—"Would you, Marteau, if you were requested to do so by the government, write a children's book? I confess I would be greatly perturbed by such a request."

Olim passed a scrap of paper to Alex, on which he had written: *If you were a Chinese child would you wish to read a story written for you by Marteau?* Alex passed back: *I would regard it as the People's Chinese Torture.* Olim scribbled: *If I wrote such a story, I would be careful that it pleased the Chinese Children's Government.*

KOROVIN, the second Russian—as they now thought of him, with his skull like the shaved head of a twelve-year-old with very ancient parents—remarked in a gentle voice that in Russia today writers were invited, *invited*, but not commanded, to write plays. Jolly Roger Pomyalov said that the position in Russia, like that in China, was that there were too few writers for too many people.

Then Pobedin, his lock of grey hair falling over his forehead, said, looking earnestly across the table at Sarret: "It will not be possible for us to reply to the extremely interesting and important remarks made by M. Sarret until tomorrow. Meanwhile, we would like to underline how important we think meetings of this kind are. We feel that, as M. Sarret has said, there have been misunderstandings, but we also feel that these can be healed by exchanging points of view frankly and sincerely. We are, as I said before, particularly glad to be here in Venice, which we all treasure as one of the gems of World Culture, and I can only repeat how appropriate it seems that EUROPLUME should be situated here. Speaking for myself, when I walked through this city today, tears

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came into my eyes, as I reflected that this beautiful place, which should be the possession of the culture of the whole world, can now be seen only by the privileged few when it ought to be the joy and recreation of the oppressed masses."

Bonvolio drove phaeton-like across the table with some remarks about the difference between being for, with, by, and from, culture, between "an intellectual engaged with culture, and enjoying his work for culture." Olim buried his head in his hands.

THEN, SUPERSEDING the sound of Bonvolio's voice, which he had muffled till it seemed but the Adriatic wave murmuring in a conch, he was awakened by the harsh disgusted voice of Csongor Botov. He looked up and saw the President of the Arts and Literary Academy of Budapest sitting up very stiffly in his chair, his hands laid on the table as though grasping the sides of a desk, and the voice coming out of a face wooden as a ventriloquist's doll. There was a kind of pointless, automatic irony about the way in which Botov said he hardly knew, listening to what had been said, which side he was on, though he supposed M. Sarret supposed he was one of what had been referred to as Them. "However, it is possible even for M. Sarret to be wrong," he went on gutturally, "and it is still possible to be in the middle even when, geographically speaking, one is placed in the area where no one is supposed to be able to understand a single thought emanating from the other side. Maybe, I am one of M. Marteau's universals, banished to a particular camp. Anyway, I am not a member of any political party, and I have to agree with my enemies when they call me the anomaly of a bourgeois living in a socialist country. All the same, in that place, where, according to M. Sarret, my speech, my appearance, my writing, and my whole existence should be totally inaccessible to the ideologically transformed populace, my books sell in thousands, they are read, I may say, by factory workers and peasant alike...." He now started boasting, quite pointlessly, in fact everything about this speech seemed, almost deliberately, pointless. "The situation may be even more complicated, much more subtly interrelated than one would imagine from the way in which M. Sarret with all his famous subtlety, has formulated it. Does M. Sarret imagine that he is flattering us in our Eastern fastnesses when he declares that we cannot think in any terms save the ideological ones he has laid down for us? Does he think it impossible that the divisions which he thinks of as intellectual might be geographical, even physiological? Would not it simplify things if M. Sarret stated baldly that *over there the trees and grass are blood-red, the sky flaming yellow, cows and sheep are bright blue?* Yet might it not still be true that inside men are what they are, and what they are is for them to know and decide, and no formula invented by philosophers hundreds of miles away can, however ingenious it be, enter into their innermost minds and discern there an automatism of ideologic thinking which is the opposite of whatever anyone is thinking over here?"

Then from being aggressive he suddenly changed his tone to an almost embarrassing sentimentality.... Striking the table with his hand—"We must try to understand one another, we must try to accept the fact that we are forced to assume certain positions. We must try to see what we REALLY are. If with our dear Soviet friends, we are able to arrive at an understanding that is analogous, then we will have made real progress...." Olim thought he was about to burst into tears. But he ended with his face directed to the Soviet writers, an oleaginous smile.

So this is the man with the gaping hole in his side, this is the one who is truly engaged, Olim thought. But is he his own writer or his own hero? Evidently he himself does not know. He wants to be both and neither. He speaks to his ideological colleagues in the language of their ideas, yet he transmits across the lines the picture of himself as a mangled corpse. As a leader of the Hungarian Writers he is of them, but as fiction he is his own truth which traverses sides in the dark night of the soul. Perhaps the triumph of his irony is to show that they, with their fairy stories

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by Marteau and Sarret for Chinese children, are the unrealists, he not as President of the Arts and Literary Academy, but as lost soul inventing his own story, is real. And what is his story? If only I could invent it, imagine it, and knock a hole through this newsreel, this Brains' Trust, this farce of a debate between ideologues, one side of which says nothing.

IV

AT MEALS, during the first two days of the conference, the French treated the Russians much as the British treat royalty, standing up when they came into the room, earnestly attentive to their lightest dropped remark about the splendours of Venice. By dinner on the third evening, they were taking action to avoid having to sit near them, and they were referring to Pobedin, Korovin, and Pomyalov as *le prêtre athéiste, l'archéologue triste,* and *le bandit.* Sarret had abandoned the theory that it was the ideological gulf which made distinguished Soviet writers, when exported by official organisations, appear inexplicably boring to their Western colleagues, for the one that these were "the wrong Russians," Grade B intellectuals, or a second Eleven.

On the third evening, at dinner, Olim found himself manœuvred into a place between the solid Russian bloc and Magda, the interpreter, on his left. Beyond Magda sat a cheerful, ruddy, virile-looking Italian writer, of curly, cherubic appearance, Leonardo Longhi. Next to Longhi, on the farthest side from Olim, was Csongor Botov, talking to his neighbour, Sereno. Their interchanges, though amicable, seemed only interludes in Sereno's long pensive silences—glimpses of the continuous white monastic wall which surrounded his being.

Longhi, besides being vivacious, was informed and had his uses. He did not accept the prescribed diet, the *"menu fixe"* laid down by Bonvolio's secretariat, and he demanded of the waiters the *"carte,"* from which he chose exuberantly, and with erudite speciality. He was not even satisfied always with what was on the *"carte,"* and sent waiters worrying to the kitchen to discover whether there were not items unprinted—perhaps unprintable—there. For instance, this evening, he succeeded in wringing from the *Stella* larder a special kind of sand worm, long, white, flat, and narrow. He entertained his neighbours by telling them how when a boy (before he became famous), he had caught (if that is the word) these in his native Calabria, watching for the small borings, heaped round with minced-sand hillocks, which showed where they were hidden.

"Did you have to dig them out?" asked Olim, who visualised Longhi clearly enough, in shorts and with brown knees, a fisher-boy among fishermen, before he did that which Olim more and more clearly identified with the Fall—published his first best-seller. "What we did was sprinkle salt round their holes." "You mean, they feed on salt." "Oh no, certainly not. But the salt causes their little hiding places in the sand to dry out, absorbing its moisture, and then they rise to the surface, so you can easily pick them up."

LONGHI WENT on talking about his prelapsarian occupations in sun and sand. Then he was the hero of the stories which had made him the hero of his readers. He liked moving conversationally back and forth between the time when he was a character who is "real" and the time when he became the highly successful creator of this character himself. He still went back to Calabria, slipping in amongst his fishermen to his previous life, but enjoying, amidst the sweat and alcohol and poverty and swearing, a *deus ex machina* status of the idler, the gourmet who is in no way different from the others, except that he is engaged in writing his book.

Not that Longhi didn't enjoy his fame; he insisted on it. He revealed this evening that he was incensed by an idea, put forward by Dunstan Curlew, during the afternoon session, that in the West—at all events, in England, by contrast with China—only bad books were read by the masses, good ones by the élite. At any rate, if this was so in Eng-

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land, it was not the case in the Italy of Leonardo Longhi's village. His books were esteemed by the best critics all over the world, but what he valued even more, he said, was their vast and—as he would call it—"authentic" circulations. As he chatted, one had only to look at him to be aware of his self-appreciation: it lay like a wreath among the curls on the intelligent brow of this chubby Cæsar. That on which he insisted most—which might not emerge, he said, from the circulation figures, was that his books had been taken to heart by the peasants of his native Calabria. "In my own village, for instance, since, naturally, they can't afford books, the circulation has only gone up by one, but everyone reads me. They read me not being able to buy, not even being able to read. They've clubbed together to buy my first and second book—one copy of each. After the day's work, they gather in the village square, and the village school-teacher reads out Leonardo Longhi—whom they know so well—to the peasants, at the rate of a page a day. They are exhausted by their work in the fields—the oppression in that areas is perhaps the worst in Italy—so they cannot read more than this. But in all that, you have the basis of a popular culture." And he went on to talk about the better conditions of a changed society, in which it would be possible for the peasants to have more time to read his books.

Taking them up one by one, and throwing back his head, he popped the white shell fish into his mouth. His naïveté had a melting charm that affected his neighbours. Olim, who since the first evening had been allergic to Magda Karinthy, in the benevolent radiance spread by Leonardo Longhi asked her how she was enjoying her trip. She smiled. "She is enjoying herself very much indeed," said Csongor Botov. "She has even found an admirer." "What is his name?" asked Olim. "Romito." "How did you meet him?" "He met me. He came up as I was walking to the hotel after the meeting and invited me to have an aperitif." "Which you did?" "But of course," Botov said; wagging a finger humoristically: "Take care! There are underground caves and cellars below the canals."

"VENICE! To Venice!" said Pomyalov, raising his glass. His damaged eye gave him the air of a great mauled tom-cat. "We want you to come to our country," he said in German. "We have many faults, there are things you will not like, and we welcome criticism. We are aware of our defects, but proud of our achievements. We think we have made many mistakes but also that we have done very good things. We are proud to welcome critics when we are assured that they will not really criticise us." He talked about the United States where he had toured. American culture was decadent but he was enthusiastic about one and all of the leaders of industry. He invited Olim to stay with him in his Moscow apartment.

Olim raised his glass to the toast and asked: "Do Russians like Italian wine?" At this, Pomyalov started talking indignantly to his two colleagues and then asked Magda to translate their joint protest. It was against Olim's implication that because propagandists of the West declared that Russians were excessive drinkers, therefore all Russians, including themselves, were addicted to drunkenness. They went on to point out that there were also heavy drinkers in England, France, and especially in America, but this did not make them draw the conclusion that the French and English in this room were drunkards. Olim explained that he had not made the implication. His apology was accepted, but the Russians drank water throughout the rest of the meal.

A few minutes later, he attempted a different approach with Pobedin. He asked: "Don't you think it would be a good thing if the great Russian translator of Shaw, K———l, were invited to Malvern, to see performances of the plays he has translated?" Pomyalov caught this suggestion in flight as it were, before Pobedin could answer it. He then transmitted through the translator the answer that he thought it would be an extremely bad thing. "Why?" asked Olim, astonished. Magda Karinthy explained that Pomyalov

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thought Olim had said K———l should on no account be invited.

Further explanations would have exonerated Olim too completely. A misunderstanding so difficult to understand showed a will to misunderstand. The meal was over, and the Russians got up huffily, and, all of them together, left the room. Olim by now felt vaguely aggressive, so quite wishing to annoy, he walked over to the place where Dunstan Curlew remained still seated at table, a predetermined look on his face, as though he were where he was as a result of the ratio of his own trajectory, when he came into the room, to forces surrounding him. "What do you think of the things now admitted by Krushchev to have happened under Stalin?" he asked. Curlew gave him one glance, and scooted out of the room.

"MAY I ASK you a question?" asked Magda Karinthy, following Olim out into the street. "Certainly, what is it?" "Perhaps not here. Do you mind if we walk on a little further?"

They took coffee in the piazza. Just beyond their table at the outside edge of all the tables set in the square, tourists walked to and fro, Venetian children, belonging to a different world from these foreigners, chased one another, and jumped on to the saddle of the red granite lion at the side of San Marco.

A great glow from the Square reflected on Magda's cheeks.

"Well—the question."

"What political party do you belong to in England?"

"None, but I vote Labour."

"What party does Mr. Dunstan Curlew belong to?"

He hesitated. Looking at her, he realised a great deal depended on his answer to this question. He said: "I don't know what party he officially belongs to. But whatever party is really his, isn't my party."

She sipped her coffee. Then he offered her a liqueur. She had a Benedictine, which she drank as if it were schnapps or Vodka, at one gulp. Then she said: "I couldn't help overhearing a question you asked Mr. Curlew just before we left the Luna. Would you be so kind as to tell me his answer to that which you asked?"

Thinking that she put things a bit pedantically—but that might be due to her otherwise almost perfect English—he said: "You mean the question about Krushchev's speech?" She nodded, almost furtively. "Well, he didn't answer. He just walked away."

"Oh." She gave a sigh, a sigh of determination. Then she said: "Some of us, Mr. Asphalt, would be very glad to know why you think it is that Mr. Dunstan Curlew, the world-famous scientist, who must be so scrupulous when making experiments on inanimate objects, yet does nothing to denounce the results of an experiment affecting the lives of thousands of human beings, when it has failed?"

"That is just what I went up to ask him."

The question, coming from her to him was not nearly so much a question, as a statement of a position with wild implications. Suddenly he appreciated the extent to which during the past few days, he had moved into an atmosphere where everything was "political," everything had ideological complications. He did not greatly like it. This question was a dramatic assertion: like tearing her Party card up in front of him, and setting light to the bits with a match, in her coffee saucer. For a moment he felt panicky, imagined her crossing frontiers, changing sides, and his being responsible for her when she left the desperate East for the disillusioning West. He would have to take care of Magda Karinthy for the rest of his life.

He played at considering the question objectively (though heaven knows where "objectivity" lay between them). Well, he made a show of attempting to answer it dead-pan-wise. "It might be precisely because he regards society as an object for scientific experiment." "All the same, why doesn't he admit the experiment has failed?" "Perhaps because he doesn't judge the freezing to death of a million contemporary rats as a failure, if he thinks that, as a result, the future will provide for a billion happier, better,

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eugenically raised ones." He added, "I am sure Mr. Curlew is perfectly sincere."

"Has he ever lived, do you think, in a country which is the object of such experiments?" "Visited often, lived never." She hesitated. "Do you agree with him then?" "No." "In that case," she exclaimed, suddenly indignant, "you must be making fun of me." "Not at all. I was trying to be objective." But his attempt had been, really, to qualify. And he realised that they were where there is black and white, but no shades.

THE INTERCHANGE affected him like a declaration from her. In fact, he was beginning to wonder whether, in their part of the world, a declaration of this kind would not swallow up all the "bourgeois" ones—for example, love. "Would you like us to go in a gondola?" was the question that, rather obviously, though it seemed impulsively eccentric, followed. For what? For privacy which was felt more necessary with every moment of their dangerous intercourse. Privacy for what?

She nodded as though she had just this in mind. They went outside the piazza where a canal runs near the Ca Giustinian by the Biennale, where he had heard the gondolier last night. The same curling sparkling individual was there. He asked them where they wished to go, and when they said out for an hour nowhere in particular, his attention automatically became a slide rule grooved along varying degrees of privacy. ——"The Laguna, the Grand Canal, or *i piccoli canali oscuri*."

For ideological reasons, they obviously chose the Laguna, where walls would not have eyes and ears. Seeing what? Hearing what? The weather was warmer and finer, though not entirely seasonal. But Venice seemed preparing for the Easter Sunday, due in two days, which would change the interior stones of San Marco to peach colour brushed over with the flickering of massed candle light, while outside the golden statue of the Saint on the campanile would be floodlit. Meanwhile, it was sufficiently cold for the gondola to be provided with a blanket which Olim drew over them both, and then, freeing them from its too broad hint, he moved away from her to his side of the boat. Contiguity remained ideological. He said: "Tell me about Csongor Botov." "What about him?" "How is he thought of in your country?" "We say that Mr. Botov reads and speaks Russian." This was said as though, as far as whoever "we" were concerned, it was final. Olim could not quite take Botov as settled at that. "But does he agree with you?" "Oh, yes," she laughed, "everyone agrees with me." "Well, why don't you trust him?" She laughed again: "Because one doesn't trust anyone—least of all Botov." They were moving out through the mouth of the Grand Canal, and he was wondering whether he really altogether liked the church of Santa Maria della Salute, with the stone scrolls under the dome, on top of which statues were placed—whether it was not too much like an object that could be picked up and placed on a white table-cloth—a vast silver cruet—while she told him—to the accompaniment of the dipping impulsions of the gondola—about Botov's career. Before the war, he was leader of the Hungarian writers influenced by surrealism, but he was also perhaps, in some ways, very Catholic. "We think that at heart he always had reactionary sympathies. Yet he also wanted to be the Hungarian Aragon. His real genius, and we don't mean this ironically, was simply his egotism. Everything he wrote—and it was wonderful—had a simple meaning lying untied within a very complicated knot—himself. Although he had always been a Russian expert, he was led to Moscow Communism by way of Paris—the split between Aragon and Breton when Aragon joined the Party.... Then during the war, he was one of those who thought the Nazis were the Voice of History."

IT ALL sounded ominously complicated, and now that they were in the Laguna, which for a few moments was a little choppy, Olim even began to feel slightly sick. What impressed him more than Botov's career was Magda Karinthy's use of the pronoun "We." Who were these formidable "We?" He had

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the impression of frowning alien free-living young people who were endlessly preoccupied with desperate gossip—not so much personal as sociological—the gossip of the younger generation about the reasons why the old had betrayed them.

"Why should a person with Botov's record have been made President—or whatever he is?" he asked, rather faintly. "Because he is so unreliable that he is thoroughly reliable from their point of view!" She said this triumphantly—it was evidently one of the elucidations her set was most proud of. "I don't quite follow." "He's open to flattery at one end, to threats at the other. The people they don't trust are the trustworthy. The people they trust least are the idealists. All the same, we think that, in the conditions of our kind of society, Botov is one of the people we most like. We like him better than the Party leaders, and we like him better than the idealist Communists who've now turned self-righteously against the Party."

"Do you like him because he's a great poet?" "All that means nothing to us. Besides, he is no longer. All that doesn't exist." "Why, then?" For the first time, she did not have the immediate answer to a question. Then she said: "I think it's because he's unhappy." "What is he unhappy about?" "Well, most of our intellectuals have betrayed their friends without thinking twice about it. But we have the impression that he's quite unhappy about Premontvian." "And who is Premontvian?" "Premontvian is a poet who was also a monk, and who was the best friend of Csongor Botov before the war. The two of them were known as 'the blessed demon and the damned priest.' Botov was ordered to denounce Premontvian at a meeting of the Writers' Association. Of course, everyone knew that he only did so because he had to, but all the same Premontvian was arrested. The story goes that after the meeting, when the socialist poet Falus came up to Botov, Botov made a wry smile, and said, 'After all, Premontvian was always a bad poet.' "

Once started, it was amazing how informed she was about everyone over there—or rather, he suspected, how informed were They, who gossiped endlessly. Pobedin, she said, was notoriously "finished" and therefore safe for export, Korovin was an innocent, and Pomyalov? Would he like to know what Pomyalov had written in *Pravda* about Rajk when he was on trial?

Still feeling a bit sick, or faint, he nodded. She had it by heart: *"The notorious traitor and Fascist Rajk is not good enough to be hanged. We demand that he should be burned at the stake like a sorcerer of the Middle Ages."*

He lay back, not looking at her, but his mind filled with her. He did not want to look. He preferred thinking, working out for himself what she was like. He remembered the hard profile she had turned to him at dinner, the first evening. Were these confidences of a kind which would soften her appearance? The question intrigued him sufficiently for him to glance at her lying sideface there a few inches from him. He expected he hardly knew what change. Her expression offered nothing to him, seemed scarcely less shut than previously. Her features were anyway peasant-like as though carved of wood, and he had the hallucination of two profiles, like the sides of a box, into which the expressive mouth and eyes had been nailed. Curious that the most responsive thing about her—it struck him—was her hair. There was something pathetic and touching about these little turned over shavings of curls. They reminded him of dolls in villages, and dancing in the streets.

Now they were moving out of the Grand Canal towards the Laguna. The waters opened and suddenly seemed darker, a great engraving of serpentine black lines, framed by a fantastically carved edge of domes and towers and statues and palaces, gilded with lights. Lying there—he locked in his thoughts, she so curiously rigid and hammered—they were like effigies sunk in a mirror out of which they stared through crepe gauze. To their right, the low wall of the *punta della dogana*—the ancient customs house—seemed the lean silhouetted bows of

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a destroyer, with behind it an ornate and rounded poop—the dome—they were now leaving—of Santa Maria della Salute.

"Do so many other of the young in Budapest feel as you do?"

"Of course." "You keep on saying 'of course,' but to us, none of this is at all obvious." His use of "us"—as against her use of the pronoun—reminded him of a side he was on, and made him feel faintly hostile, yet more than ever personally implicated with her. She replied, on a note of dry aggressiveness: "The great majority of us feel the same about things, though not in the way that M. Sarret condescends to imagine our attitudes." "But aren't the young organised—all of them—into Party Youth groups and so on?" "You mean what we call—*The Young Persons' Brothel*?"

"By that, you imply that the morals of the young in the Party are loose?" he asked this in the nervous self-conscious self-mocking accent in which Alex and he asked marginal things. "Not at all. The Party is very puritanical. That is why the young converted themselves into one large brothel." "I don't understand." "Well, perhaps it isn't very clear. The Party wanted a spiritual brothel. We provided it with a physical one." "You mean—to save the spirit?" "Not quite that: to lose it in our own way, not theirs." "To be damned, for instance?" "But that would be too serious." "What do you mean?" "Besides, it would be bourgeois. Like an essay on Baudelaire by M. Sarret."

"Then you aren't bourgeois?" She paused, and then said committally: "No. We aren't serious." He felt that perhaps after all Sarret was right. A gulf separated them. In the guilt-gilt surrounding darkness he envisaged another darkness—framed by barbed wire, where the heart, to survive, had to become heartless. There were perhaps more divisions, more gulfs, more cracks, more of isolation, in heaven and earth than were known in Sarret's philosophy. The body too was an island which had its language flashing across to other islands—without the heart even knowing or caring. He took her hand.

Holding it as though it were a bridge (an Europlume, a Bonvolio), across the gulfs, he asked: "Are you typical, in the way you talk? Are they all like you?" "Are *you* typical?" she mocked back. "You certainly seem to share the view of Sarret that we all have to be the same." "Well, you keep on talking about 'us,' and 'we,' the whole time, as though you were a whole lot of people. And yet you know a great deal about the West. And you've read Sarret on Baudelaire." "As a matter of fact, I am very Westernised. Haven't you noticed that I can speak several languages?" "Then how is it that you are allowed out?" "In the first place, they have to have an interpreter. In the second place there is my uncle." "Who is your uncle?" "He is the most famous Marxist historian at the University. He is also from a very rich Jewish family. He has also travelled all over the world. He is not reliable, but he is so famous that he is useful. There are a good many ways of being necessary, you know." She withdrew her hand. He took it again and she let it stay in his as though she had never taken it away.

SHE WAS like a fellow-conspirator or someone one might meet in total darkness with whom anything is possible because absolutely nothing is significant. Here they were at a moment of time and place on the most artificial waters in the world, in a melting unreality which would never recur, strangers alone on a journey who unburden themselves of secrets, pour out their bodies to one another even, in the certainty that they will never meet again. The gondolier was there, of course, but to him, they were just lovers. Which showed that an ideological gulf separated him from a time they had just entered. He was a keeper of a minute portable brothel, but not a spy.

He loosened her dress, touched the gulf between her breasts, the gulf between her thighs, punning dreamily sensually with the idea of gulfs in the ideology of Sarret. It was in a way a serious pun. Promiscuous love-making is magic renewal through stale incantation. What was new in this was the peculiar anonymity of her response which he

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measured in memory against, for instance, a prostitute's, or, more interestingly, an American's. At the party in New York, this girl whom he had seen once before only, came up to him, and, standing not more than two yards from her husband, said: "I dreamed about you last night." "What kind of dream?" She shook her head: "I couldn't possibly tell." He led her into the next room and she still said she couldn't tell, so they went out into the garden. The ground-floor room where the party was showed like a summerhouse on a stage-set. The grass and trees and a hedge, lit from this interior, looked as if they were soaked in veridian ink. Shadows cut trenches through light, and he took her into one slit and asked: "May I kiss you?" "Why not?" "Why not?" he repeated, "surely the fact that your husband is about six yards away is one reason why not." She had thick hair hanging down in locks, and wide eyes, and when she shook her head it was as though flakes of pure light fell out of her hair, as she said, "You say that because you have this sense of guilt."

The difference was, of course, that when it came to going further than kissing, the American girl had her fetichist scruples about what betraying her husband meant. With Magda, holds were not barred. What all three of them—Magda, the American girl, and himself—had in common was the conviction that an act could be put away in an enclosing silence, partake of an anonymity of the body, as though there were a way in which a man and woman, interlacing, imposed oblivion on the future, and deleted their names.

THE MOON had risen yellow as a pumpkin above the Doges' Palace and, beyond it, the palazzi converted into hotels, behind a wide promenade, on their left. It dwindled rapidly, like an emptying pricked balloon whizzing up the sky. Moonlight clanged down heavily on waves, languid as reefed sails, through which the gondola went pushing on. Then the yellowness drained away: the moon turned to that silver which segments crimes against a black backcloth, illustrating distantly the Paris roof under which his mistress was lying, the bent profiles in the streets between walls of Eastern Europe. He rejected the reproach beamed out across several hundred miles from Paris by his mistress. For in his private morality, love in an islanded second is beauty cut off from all other experiences, and would go (he thought) spinning down corridors of remembering which he was already beginning to anticipate. This moment was struck of that minting. He drew the two sides of her dress apart, and lifted the cover sufficiently to see the flesh like a carving, with her rounded breasts, and below them, the denting and embossment of her ribs. Her body in its partial nakedness was soft, luxurious, Western, and made a quite different impression from her Social Realist face. It seemed to belong to Parisian scented bourgeois poetry which she kept down there under her dress.

Then the moon called his attention to what he could so easily forget: that he was fifty. She was twenty-five, yet she did not appear to have noticed the difference in their ages, perhaps for a reason that hurt more than it flattered. She was indifferent to everything that made a relationship personal and tender. Here he was back at Sarret's gulfs—so wrong, and perhaps, after all, so right. The divisions of one part of the world from another may after all be not ideological but different contexts of physiological living. The cells of her body in her social context expected something different from the cells in his body in his bourgeois one.

AM I unhappy? This thought sent him rolling on his side, physically away from her. Then he moved again on to his back, but keeping his distance. He looked up at the stars standing above the figure of the gondolier erect as a tower, his oar a strut supported by the quicksilver surface of the water. The idea of Sarret was in his mind, at the centre of this sky. To do Sarret justice, perhaps he knew more about all this than was evident in his logic which made him its victim, for the torrents, the oceans of words that poured out of him were not just philosophy, but a world. They contained hotel

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bedrooms and beds, cars and bars, boulevards and cinemas, drugs, absinthe, cigarettes, contraceptives, lovers—normal, Lesbian and homosexual—partisans, reactionaries, professors, intellectuals, psychologists, ministers; and young men coming from the provinces to lose their ideals in the Latin Quarter. For Olim to write his novel, *Littérature Engagée*, he must not think of Sarret as the incarnate mind that spoke in conferences but as world in language which could do nothing but discover truth, and never lie. He must think of him on his travels, or asleep, or in bed. The truth would be in the fiction. And perhaps this Magda Karinthy, now not translating from and into Russian, was the Magda of fiction that was the truth he would write in *Littérature Engagée*. Now the gondolier had started singing and it was to his chanting *Luna Luna* that Olim fell asleep in the gondola.

BOTOV was alone in a small oval room like an *intaglio* of green agate at Florian's. He was seated at a round table which looked out into the piazza, a huge shop-window. He sat at the edge of his chair into which he had let himself down gently—as if his body were a great sack of pains looted from his bourgeois past, that he, a burglar, was condemned to carry about everywhere with him for the rest of his life. He ordered a glass of *crême de menthe*, having the idea that this was all his stomach could now digest in the way of spirits. Then he leaned his elbows on the table. Then extending his fingers of both hands, he held his face in them. The cheek-bones seemed a kind of handles conveniently provided for such support. In this position, he hoped that his body, with its tremblings, its recent habit of—at one slight move—seeming to jump down an abyss, its terrible emptiness, as though it were some modernist sculpture with holes cut through it—he hoped to fix his body in an iron pose through which his turbulent thoughts might pour—like water frothing in a trough. He could not, of course, control them, but he hoped by containing them to prevent them agitating his bones and flesh. Thoughts were hunting him. But gradually they did become more coherent, and, by keeping very still, he could listen to them. It was a speech they were making, a speech in which the Absolute Truth (for that they claimed to be) addressed Sarret in a hall which was the cavity between the surface of the brain, and the inner side of the skull.

"YOU ARE wrong, utterly wrong. There are indeed two worlds, but they are not as you think they are, my dear M. Sarret." (It was impossible to avoid the vulgar and stupidly pretentious irony with which his thoughts said "My dear M. Sarret"). "They are not literary gentlemen sitting at a café table of the Boulevard Saint Germain des Prés" (cheap again!) "and explaining that they cannot understand one another's different interpretations of Marxism, decadence, social realism, Proust, Joyce, etc., because each group represents a different ideology. I tell you, gentlemen, it is perfectly clear what the truth of the matter—and that is, the difference—really is. Yet the truth of this truth is that if one knows it, one has extreme difficulty in getting one's words into any sort of order, because one is completely engulfed by each separate instant of reality. Therefore one cannot pursue the words to the end of the sentence. How can I explain that reality is that which, in being lived, cannot be described or explained? You talk of social realism—but things that happen to you can be so real that you can't call them realism—because—and this is what I am trying to say—'reality' is in itself an abstraction—I mean, to call things 'reality,' gentlemen, is to fit them into a context of other things already thought of, and this makes them unreal. Gentlemen, I have not explained this rightly. What I mean is—things can be so real—they tear you apart—and if you think at all—while you are experiencing them with the horror of a death-bed realisation which is perhaps the final truth of life—then all you can think—if you think at all—is that no one can possibly express this because—don't you see, gentlemen—to express the reality of the one who thinks and feels and suffers in our coun-

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tries, implies a reader with calm balanced eyes, a reader sitting in a chair and looking down on a page on which things are printed in lines running parallel, and able to take them in. All this already implies that he is far removed from that reality. Reality of the kind I am trying to talk about cannot be written down, it cannot even be remembered the moment after it has happened, because memory would already have smoothed it over, rounded it into a smooth soothed object like a pebble thrown out of ferocious seas—whereas the real imprisons you in its moment which is totally separated from every other moment. That is your ideological gulf, M. Sarret: the gulf between the single separate horrifying moment of realisation, and the re-collected moments strung together in a necklace of polished memories. But each real moment claims that there is no other moment apart from its terrible self. It rages at the idea that anything else could be more appallingly real. Horror is envious. In your countries, gentlemen, there is Remembrance of Things Past, in our countries there are moments with gnashing teeth that tear you apart, devour you into themselves. For the sake of the sacred truth, I implore you, gentlemen, to drop talking about realism, engagement, and the rest. No one has the right to talk about reality who does not live night and day on a diet of the irremediable!"

THIS DID not do, it did not do at all. It was his mad dog ego: the one he thought had been shot or tamed or muzzled five years previously. Leaping the loop, leaping through a hoop. Rhetoric of the ego, his greatest weakness. This which could substitute the epithet of his self-description for the substantive of what he was, could bury his vital defects under the flourishing epitaph of suppositious posthumous fame, obscure spiritual failure in the glamour of vocation. The President of the Academy! An honour which he knew to be the sign of his debasement! His immortality! Immorality! (A fire which still insistently burned through the betrayals and surrenders of every hour of his present life!) He thought! He could still deceive himself! His greatest shame: the poetic turned into a lie by rhetoric!

HE DID now find Florio's intolerable. He paid his *conto*, and went quickly out into the piazza. Slid out there into a glittering tank of similar forms gliding across a wide dim floor, and darting under columns. The feeling of the anonymity of the living under the shell-like carvings and grottoes of the dead, was a relief. For a moment only. Then his eyes grew accustomed and it all grew lighter and lighter.

He walked under the arcades past shop windows full of lace, filigree jewellery, leather wallets, beads, photogravure reproductions of masterpieces, chandeliers, and frightful Venetian glass knick-knacks. Here, out in the open, the dialectic, the gale of history blew in full force against him again, so that while certain thoughts opened great spaces under his feet, others became like straps, pillars to which he clung or hung.

What could happen was quite different from the nostalgic, poignant or deliberate, effort of remembering. It was that an unburied fragment of experience leaped at him out of the past, a monstrous scene which had animal force, sprang at him, struck him down with its paw. And now, as he leaned against a pillar of the colonnade—with on one side the glittering shop-windows, on the other, the talking, shuffling, amorous piazza—the statues on the roofs on the far side of the piazza were frozen into witnesses of his speech at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Writers' Association. He was seated at the table amongst colleagues with whom he had drunk wine or quarrelled, supported or attacked, befriended or made into bogeys—but who were now suddenly united in sharing the ignominious oppressive feeling of a classroom row—but a row which involved not just an expulsion, but expulsion followed by imprisonment, perhaps by death. Csongor Botov had been cast for the rôle of making the speech which they all knew, and all knew had to be made, and all knew that if he did not make it, another of them would certainly have to do so. He was

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the spokesman of their shame, and although they condemned him in their hearts as a traitor, yet they felt a secret sympathy for this leader and scapegoat, chosen to select a scapegoat. "It is my painful duty to have to criticise the most recent volume of poems published last month by our colleague Ladyas Premontvian. These have already been justly singled out for blame by the Party Press and I do not have anything to add to the censure of our comrades the critics, to whom we ought to record our gratitude for their guidance. Despite the themes of working-class life which Premontvian has chosen, it is painfully evident that he describes poverty not because he wishes to participate in our common task of abolishing it through socialism, but because he clings to the reactionary concept of Our Lady of Poverty, sacred and holy. First, it is apparent he has the reactionary purpose of deceiving his readers into thinking that the monks and priests whom we all know to be the oppressors and exploiters and robbers of the people's wealth—are on the side of the poor. Secondly, this volume is a hidden dagger aimed at the heart of our Association and its aims. I have to ask you to expel Ladyas Premontvian."

He did not look at Premontvian while he made his speech. Quite apart from the difficulty, in the circumstances, of looking into the eyes of his oldest friend, he was strangely fascinated by two things: partly by the pure coincidence that what he was saying about Premontvian's book was perfectly true, and partly by the sound of his own voice, which instead of its old aggressive over-confident buoyancy and attack, had acquired a harsh tone which made everything he said sound as though it were intended ironically, though such a nuance had no sense whatever.

After the meeting, the members of the Association (who had, of course, supported Botov's motion unanimously) stood up, without speaking. Botov became aware that Premontvian had left the room, and then (as though the Sacrament had been blessed at Mass, and the moment the core of most sacred silence had passed) he lifted his eyes. For some reason, the socialist poet Falus walked across the room and shook his hand warmly.

And then Botov, who loved to adorn his works with dedications, quotations, references used with a profound irony, amazed and quite pleased himself by quoting aloud that passage in *Julius Cæsar* which always seemed to him to contain the seed of mysterious wise political comment when, after Cæsar's murder, the mob tears to pieces Cinna the poet. Looking straight at Falus in that fixed way which holds an auditor's half-embarrassed attention to any kind of spontaneous reciting by heart, Botov spoke the voices as though they were question and answer in a liturgy. *"Your name, sir, truly." "Truly, my name is Cinna." "Tear him to pieces, he's a conspirator." "I am Cinna the poet, I am Cinna the poet." "Tear him for his bad verses, tear him for his bad verses." "I am not Cinna the conspirator." "It is no matter, his name's Cinna; pluck but his name out of his heart, and turn him going." "Tear him, tear him. Come brands, ho, firebrands!"* He shouted the last words across the room, with his eyes staring, as they stared now and he started shouting inside his heart across the piazza at the judging, witnessing statues—"When Falus was arrested a few days later, and interned for some four years in Recsk, I gave money to his wife," his thoughts shouted. "I tried to intervene in favour of Heves, the Communist poet, tortured to death. I tried to atone for Premontvian's expulsion. Yet I was relieved when I heard that Premontvian had died in prison. I did not regret the death of Heves. I see in the release of Falus now a threat."

He moved along the side of the piazza under the colonnade, as if he were leaning against the side of a cliff in a storm. He came to the plate-glass window of a café across the wide passage which goes alongside San Marco. There, as though in a shop window, he saw Sarret, Marteau, Borès, and Longhi. In the gold light of the interior, above the white top of the table, through the gleaming transparency dividing him from them, they looked like saleable objects in a shop, or an advertising display, wax fruit in a bowl, tailor's dummies. Sarret was jerking his arms

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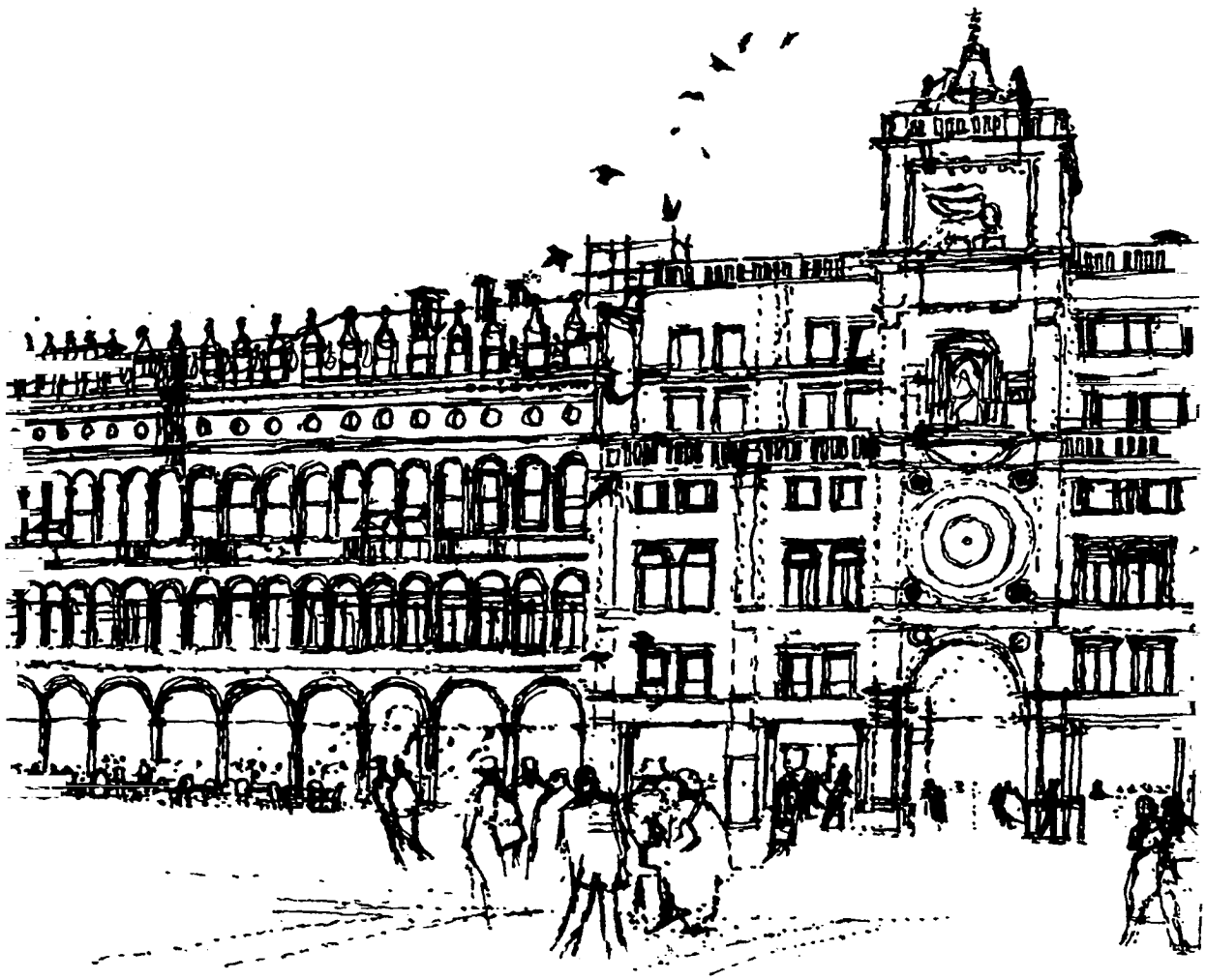
and body in animated conversation, occasionally opening and shutting his mouth quickly in a snap of laughter. The way he moved made Botov think of mechanical joints—ah, and that creaking of limbs on wires was not unlike the dry cicada rasp of Sarret's voice. The four of them looked gay yet not joyous, seriously occupied with intense intellectual frivolity, putting down their ideas as if they were cards placed on top of one another in a game, Sarret's lowest trump killing any of their aces. And then he noticed, seated at a table not far off, with an expression of nostalgia and malice on his face, Olim Asphalt, also looking at them, the Englishman who brought back to the outer edge of Botov's mind a scene in a vineyard on the shore of Lake Balaton.

Bourgeois is bourgeois is bourgeois is a rose is a rose. He visualised in the heart of a cabbage the soft decay in the centre of the West, his own past in Paris. At any rate, he was distracted. The gale of the thoughts had shifted direction, and he managed to leave hold of the column against which he was leaning half-clinging and (boldly!) enter the ballroom floor of the piazza.

"HI! WHERE are you going? I know you, kid! You come with me." He was stopped by a black-suited, tight-trousered man dressed in what seemed black livery. He had a handsome sneering face. He stepped across Botov's path and held him by the shoulder. "You come with me."

Terrible past memories and future fears



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interlocked. A dock hand had once taken him along the quayside at Barcelona, far from a wine-bar where they had been drinking. The man who, until then, had been friendly, suddenly thrust his hand into Botov's pocket and took out his wallet. Botov snatched it back. While each pulled at his side of it, the man, with a violent gesture, opened his own jacket, and showed, pinned inside it, a police badge.

Living now in a country where the criminals had become the police, the police, blackmailers, even at this moment when the recollection of the earlier incident filled him with a mad desire to do what he had done then—thrust the wallet into the man's hands and run across trailing wires and planks, pursued by whistles and cries, for his life—at the same time he felt nostalgia for that bright sunlit moment in Barcelona, an episode which, retrospectively, islanded the immense freedom of his surrounding life at that time. He did in fact now start running. When he seemed safe from the man's grasp, he saw the folly of this, stopped, and said in an English as bad as his detainer's: "I never met you. I do not ever see you before dis." "You come with me. Why you so frightened? There's nothing to be afraid." "Pliss liv me go home." "I do not hurt anyone. You hurt me here." He touched the place where his heart might be presumed to beat, with a gesture of Italian *cuore*, and withdrew like the shutting of a door, into the shadows of the arcade.

CSONGOR BOTOV walked diagonally across the lower half of the Piazza towards the Ca Giustinian. Out there, between the hotel and post office, he heard the voice of the gondolier of their first evening—Carlino, whom he had missed till now—just returned from his trip with Olim Asphalt and Magda. Botov walked up to him. That he felt unafraid with this young man, seemed an immense assuagement, a benediction of stooping stars. Carlino's cheerful appearance, his curling hair like a cap, his smile, extraordinarily gave him the feeling of the deliciousness of sanity, as though a few moments' calm were like an exotic fruit, or caviare. "Carlino—where should we go?" he asked, hypothetically. "The *laguna*, the Grand Canal, or the little obscure canals!" Carlino reeled off. "How much do you charge?" "1,500 lire for an hour." "I call that very expensive——" "But it is the night——" He leaned forward, extending one hand, a humorous and ardent figure of Mercury. "I wasn't complaining. But it is too late." "The signor can sleep all day. It is I who have to work. The gondola is very restful for the signor." "No." "Why won't you come?" he said, pleading, but suddenly curious in a personal and friendly way. "Perhaps because I am afraid," said Botov, as if quite joyously confessing. "Afraid? Afraid of me? Me——" he burst out laughing. And Botov laughed too, laughed till he bent double, and tears choked him. "Afraid. Not just of you. I am afraid of everything," he laughed. "Then with me you need not be." It was true. He felt a wave of unafraidness move over him, delicious as death, so beautiful that he could have said—take me, throw me into the *laguna*, knife me, let me drown, so long as I am not afraid. "I will really come tomorrow night. I promise." He turned away, walking through the darkness as the voice "Gondola! Gondola" with a slight laugh through its rising accent, faded into a distance where there was peace.

(To be concluded next month)

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Poem of Celebration

I LEAN against the air.
It gives way like unstitched water.
I fall in but am drowned in air.
Now distinctly every image
reflects the invisible world
to prove the sabbath light—
the light that never changes.

The other side of glass
where gorgeous energies pass
my twice-bewildered soul lies sound-wrecked there.
I lounged against the atmosphere
and it caved in unexpectedly.
I linger in the air.

The noise divides from the light.
Drugged astronomers who at night
peep through the window pane of the colossal skies
look too far for the furthest star.
This world confirms my senses.

Swaying and drunk with seeing
the near magnificence of things,
here I cry out a doxology
with the surprise of a shout—
yet with the maximum of silence.
Otherness is staring with three eyes.

But I'm treading earth not water
to breathe upon this empty page;
how else may I give human thanks, human praise,
but to put an invisible poem
in the visible cage and leave it there.
Look, I'm back again to where you are:
I came through a hole in the air.

Enriched forever. Hardly evangelical
but still my rainbowed heart blessed and thumping.
Any man may gather the images of despair;
I'll say "I will" with an ascending lazarus voice
and, like an accident, breathe in space and air.

Dannie Abse

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LETTERS

"MEN AND POWER"

I READ Mr. Christopher Sykes's review of my book *Men and Power* with benefit.

Mr. Sykes says that Lord Templewood was closely connected with Lord Trenchard's work during the war. Mr. Sykes is wrong. Lord Templewood did not even know Trenchard. Lord Templewood was launched on his career by Bonar Law, who appointed him to the Air Ministry in 1922. His knowledge of Trenchard in war-time is second-hand.

Haig tells in his diary that Trenchard came to him to report on 26th January, 1918—"Trenchard thinks that the Air Service cannot last as an independent Ministry, and that Air Units must again return to Army and Navy."

I wrote in *Men and Power*: "He was a father who tried to strangle the infant at birth though he got credit for the grown man."

BEAVERBROOK

London SW1

"THE TOYNBEE MILLENNIUM"

IT IS well known that when little frogs in puddles look at larger frogs in ponds a glare of green and red light comes across their eyes. Normally, however, they do something to disguise their rage and envy, and the criticism which they express is carefully masked in objectivity. More honest, or simply more maddened by rage, Mr. Trevor-Roper attempted no such disguise in his passionate outpouring against my father.

I cannot defend Arnold Toynbee as a historian since I am not a historian myself. But then Mr. Trevor-Roper's article was not attacking him as a historian. It was attacking him as a megalomaniac obscurantist and would-be messiah. And on this issue I can certainly claim more knowledge than Mr. Trevor-Roper has derived from his study of my father's work. After all, I have known this maniac intimately for forty years and surely he must, at some moment of indiscretion, have let it out to me that he wished to be worshipped. It would have been only fair to me to do so, for as the son of the new God I should myself have enjoyed some kind of divine status. I can only say that no such hint has ever been given to me.

Anybody who has any personal knowledge of my father will have been laughing in quite the unintended way long before he reached the end of Mr. Trevor-Roper's case-book material.

Among the funniest elements was the tormented emotionalism with which this assault on emotionalism was conducted. My father's modesty is famous —perhaps excessive—and I have had many personal occasions for testing its deep sincerity. And as for being obscurantist and religiously bigoted, as for lusting for destruction, all these charges will be equally grotesque to those who know him. For those who do not, I will simply say that he is a left-wing liberal in politics, uncertain but hopeful in religious belief, and a man of the utmost gentleness in private life.

Then what *can* be the reason for this hysterical distortion? Mr. Trevor-Roper writes like the self-inflating frog of the fable, who is in the very process of bursting. Is there some sad failure of his own work or life which accounts for this fury? Perhaps his new appointment will make up for it and help to calm down those agitated spirits.

PHILIP TOYNBEE

Lindsey, Suffolk

"TROUBLED DIALOGUE"

The two letters printed below form a sequel to the correspondence between Ivan Anissimov and Ignazio Silone which we published in our June issue.—Ed.

I. Anissimov

Signor Silone,

My first thought, on receiving your long letter, was that you must have sent it to the wrong address. Literary exercises of a similar nature are broadcast daily by Radio Free Europe and other kindred stations. Then I decided that you had simply lost your head, and with it the capacity for reasonable discourse. In Zürich, where our dialogue began, your behaviour was different.

The angry tone of your letter, its deliberate distortion of facts and of historical perspective, its bitter hostility to socialism and Marxism—all these, Signor Silone, make it abundantly clear that you are a diehard reactionary and that you feel only hatred and repugnance for the great social upheavals that are transforming the condition of humanity in our time. Your so-called "independent revolutionary" and "socialist" writings are a mere travesty. You now stand completely unmasked by your own letter.

In Zürich, I confess, I formed no great illusions as to the nature of your "independent revolutionary" attitude. But your present letter, with its tone of shameless effrontery and its hysterical outbursts of bad temper (the latter obviously provoked by

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the failure of the Hungarian counter-revolution, a card on which you too had gambled)—this letter shows up your character in its true colours, and it must be said that the resulting picture is not particularly attractive.

You go too far, Signor Silone, when you dare to speak disrespectfully of my country and to calumniate the Soviet socialist system, which is upheld by the will of two hundred million people.

You go much too far, Signor Silone, when you try to give lessons to the representatives of Soviet literature.

You yourself must realise that, after a letter such as the one you have had the insolence to send me, no further dialogue is possible between us. Your letter shows that you yourself do not want to continue this dialogue—indeed, that you are afraid to continue it—because you know that, despite the furious attacks of the reactionaries, the socialist world is gaining strength all the time, and the latest campaign of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist calumnies, which you have been so ardently promoting, is already on the wane, and must ultimately subside altogether. Truth will take its rightful place.

That is the real reason for your anger, Signor Silone; that is why outrages and insults flow so readily from your pen.

IVAN ANISSIMOV

Moscow, 3rd April, 1957

II. Silone

M. Anissimov,

Having formerly had some practice in decoding letters from totalitarian countries, I am able to glean two important admissions from your letter of April 3rd.

In the first place, it would appear that you listen daily to the broadcasts of Radio Free Europe and other Western stations. I am glad you do—not that I consider these radio stations to be endowed with any particular monopoly of the truth, but simply because the truth is more likely to be arrived at by a systematic comparison of what both sides are saying. Foreign broadcasts, it is currently reported, are finding an increasingly wide audience in Russia, especially among students. If this is true, it is certainly a fact of some importance. A similar development took place in Italy during the years that preceded the fall of the dictatorship.

But your second and more important admission (which your picturesque and truculent expressions of mock indignation only serve to emphasise) is that you are unfortunately not able to answer any of my proposals, although they were motivated by the genuine wish to improve relations between Russian writers and their Western counterparts. To begin with, despite our Zürich agreement, my letter has not appeared in your review, whereas the full text of yours was not only published by *Tempo Presente* but also, on my initiative, translated into several other languages. All I can say is that I hope this failure to keep your side of the bargain was due to outside pressure and not to any decision of your own.

There was another proposal I made which I am even more disappointed to find you prevented from accepting. I had hoped that we might publicly check and compare our information—yours and mine respectively—on the Hungarian revolt of October, 1956, its origin, its nature, and its final suppression by the Russian armed forces. Why do you shrink from trying to find out the truth? Your leaders apparently fear public discussion of this subject too greatly to allow it.

What became of the vast number of eminent Russian writers, historians, critics, and dramatists who vanished during the Stalin era without leaving a trace? This is another subject on which you continue to remain silent; and your silence throws a sinister doubt on the official repudiation of that terrifying period. I find it extraordinary, for instance, that you should still be unable to give a definitive version of Maxim Gorki's death. At the time, a Soviet court of inquiry declared him to have been poisoned, and that verdict has not so far been rescinded. How much longer do we have to wait before knowing whether or not you uphold it? And when can we hope for some light to be shed on the fate of the others—all the writers who were deported or sentenced to death without a trial?

It is deplorable that you were not allowed to accept my proposal of a fund to be raised among the democratic writers of all countries in commemoration of the Russian intellectuals who fell victims to the Stalinist terror. The proceeds would have been devoted to printing their diaries, memoirs, and other hitherto unpublished manuscripts, and the testimony of any survivors who witnessed their martyrdom. Is it not a matter of some concern to you that this act of reparation which we all owe to their memory will become increasingly difficult as time goes by?

And lastly, why were you not allowed to give us some explanation as to why the Moscow Jewish theatre was and still is closed down, and why all publications in the Yiddish language were and still are forbidden? Do your leaders realise that these measures are unspeakably disgraceful? But I must apologise—I was almost forgetting that you are not in a position to reply.

In these circumstances, I can only agree with you, M. Anissimov: a dialogue between us is hardly possible and would in any case be meaningless. Censorship forces you to turn a deaf ear to everything I say. When you can answer my questions, the ones I have already asked you and others that I am holding in reserve, as freely as I have answered, and shall always be ready to answer, yours—only then can our dialogue be resumed.

I hope that this letter will not take too long to reach you.

Yours sincerely,

IGNAZIO SILONE

Rome, 10th April, 1957

(*Translated by Darina Silone*)

ENGLISH HUMOUR

IN THE May edition of ENCOUNTER Mr. Dwight Macdonald takes exception to the present quality of English humour on a number of counts; he considers it to be plainly unfunny, to rest largely upon

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the type of humour provided by the Crazy Gang and to be generally crude, overstressed, and unsubtle in the worst American style.

It is dangerous to claim that there is such a thing as American humour since the American nation is the most cosmopolitan that civilisation has yet produced. Nevertheless Mr. Macdonald, perhaps as a reaction against this fact, falls into the trap of narrowing down English humour to fit his own thesis. Moreover, his attitude is vitiated by a constant awareness of, and reference to, his own intellectual capabilities. (I.Q.'s are pretty high in ENCOUNTER these days.)

In spite of Mr. Macdonald's claim that the Crazy Gang appeals to the Queen, Dame Edith Sitwell (I always did have suspicions about her), many foreign ambassadors, and the rowdier rugger clubs, it is in the realms of English humour that an intellectual distinction and, in spite of the Welfare State, a class distinction exists.

I am not aligning myself with Mr. Macdonald in criticising the more direct and less sophisticated humour which seems to make him see red. Life would certainly be much duller without the Al Reads and Jimmy Wheelers of this world. Even so, radio and television constantly present us with types of humour which aim at more discerning tastes. Into this wide and flexible range one would have to put artists of diverse attitudes and intentions, among them Tony Hancock, with his cultural parodies and assumed, easily deflatable pomposity, Braden and his quick-fire sophisticated humour, those masterly exponents of social satire—Ustinov and Jones, and the members of the Goon Show, with their anarchic and illogical fantasies.

Although many of the people who thoroughly enjoy such performers are those who, like Mr. Macdonald, are diverted by Paul Jennings in *The Observer* and the humorous competitions of *The New Statesman* and its like, they nevertheless constitute an important body of opinion in the field of public entertainment which radio and television cannot afford to ignore. My claim that such a group exists is intended to contradict Mr. Macdonald's assertion that English humour is largely amateur and muddling.

To my mind one of the main differences between English and American humour is that the English are prepared to laugh at themselves. The Americans, of course, do make films in which they appear to laugh at themselves, films like "The Girl Can't Help It" (Victim—Rock 'n' Roll) or "Red Garters" (Victim—the Western film). Nevertheless this appears to be done in a half-hearted and uncertain manner, because that which is attacked often seems as powerful at the end as at the beginning of the film. Think how much more successful "The Solid Gold Cadillac" (a satire on American big business) would have been for the omission of the final Technicolor shot of Judy Holliday in the gold Cadillac.

On the other hand, when British films attack something, one leaves the cinema with the impression that a subject hitherto revered has had its fallibility proven and has been brought down to a human level. "Top Secret" and "Brothers-in-Law" provide excellent examples of this. . . .

As far as English humour on the stage is concerned, Macdonald is on surer ground. "Hotel Paradiso," which he cites, was surely one of the most pathetic farces the London theatre has been forced to suffer for some time. . . . Finally, I would like to take Mr. Macdonald to task for stating that English audiences are readier to laugh than American ones. The stupidity of the mass-produced American comedy shows which clog both Channels One and Nine nowadays is only intensified by the ridiculous, unsolicited laughter which stems from the studio audience, the vast majority of which seems by implication to be mentally deficient.

The English do have a genuine and discerning sense of humour, but they are also aware of the values of moderation.

RALPH WILLETT
Arts Faculty Chairman
University of Nottingham
Nottingham

"SCARLET EMINENCE"

WHEN Mr. C. M. Grieve [better known as Hugh Macdiarmid] has completed his "1st Hymn to Vorkuta," his "2nd Hymn to Karaganda," and his "3rd Hymn to Budapest"—only to mention a few of the Soviet "mistakes" he condones so easily—then we may begin to believe that his stomach is as strong as he claims it is.

May I quote to him the well-known lines of Pasternak?

"*Hallo*," I cry (my hands over my eyes, my scarf around my face), "*What Millennium are you celebrating out there today?*"

NICHOLAS MORDVIN
Morvern, Argyll

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BOOKS

The Age of Hoover

AMERICANS as a rule prefer nostalgia to memory. When they find little to be nostalgic about, they can develop a remarkable talent for forgetfulness. Today, for instance, one of the most trying tasks for a teacher of history is to persuade the young that the great depression really happened. They can accept it as a proposition, see it as a plunging line on a chart, but they are unable to realise it as a moral event, to imagine the devastation of the collapse, the full anguish of its prolonged unemployment, and above all to grasp the meaning of the sudden failure of the nation's social faith. Their own social awareness does not go back beyond the Truman era; they can readily believe in the Second World War, since they live directly in its shadow. But much of the domestic political discussion of the post-war epoch, because it is still infused with the stale grievances of the New Deal era, is not only unintelligible to them, but—in a time of prosperity—largely devoid of interest.

There have been times when it seemed that the failure of memory might also be a failure of gratitude, and that Franklin D. Roosevelt might prove to be one of the forgotten men of American political history. No doubt some of these complacent undergraduates had parents who twenty years ago stood in breadlines or at least lived in fear of losing their jobs, their businesses, their homes. Were parents unwilling to confess to past fears and frustrations, ashamed to acknowledge any feeling of obligation? Were the social realities of the 1930s to live on only as a hollow echo in some of the more demagogic speeches of Mr. Truman?

It is the happiest answer to these questions that Arthur M. Schlesinger's brilliantly evocative account* of the Republican régimes of the twenties and the early years of the depression has been enthusiastically received and very widely read. The reception of the book, coming right after James M. Burns' equally popular *Roosevelt: the Lion and the Fox* and the third volume of Frank Freidel's distinguished multi-volume biography, suggests that interest in Roosevelt and the prewar past is far from dead. Possibly, few American undergraduates are among the readers of these volumes, but if their parents are persuaded to think once again of the 1930s as something more than the period when Alger Hiss met Whittaker Chambers, the national memory may yet be restored.

IN THIS, the first of four projected volumes on the age of Roosevelt, Mr. Schlesinger leads us only to the threshold of the New Deal itself. This volume begins with a series of rather perfunctory chapters on the period from about 1900 to 1919, the age of FDR's predecessors—the first Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. By the time he has brought his story forward to the crisis of 1932 and Roosevelt's nomination, almost three-fourths of his pages are spent. The remainder of the book is occupied by a flashback, recounting with admirable brevity and perception the main outlines of Roosevelt's own career up to the election of 1932 and by an analysis of his campaign strategy.

Although the pages devoted to Herbert Hoover are fewer by far than those given to Roosevelt, it is the shadow of Hoover which somehow dominates the central chapters.

* *The Age of Roosevelt: The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919–1933.* By ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, JR. Heinemann. 42s. (To be published on July 8.)

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Periodically, in their search for presidential candidates, American political parties grow weary of professional politicians or find it inexpedient to choose them. Instead they turn to political amateurs, most commonly from the military, like Eisenhower and Grant, but occasionally, like Hoover and Willkie, from the world of business. In American politics, Hoover was a mutant—if you will, a freak. Not only had he never run for any political office before he ran for the presidency; he had spent so large a part of his mature life outside the United States that even his extraordinary business success might be considered an international rather than an American phenomenon. When the First World War began, he was living in England ("Pre-War England," he has said, "was the most comfortable place in which to live in the whole world."). His relief work in the war made him internationally famous, and he survived the most disreputable phases of the post-war Republican administrations without being besmirched by them.

A remote and autocratic man by temperament, Hoover had grown rather arrogant in the course of his astonishing successes in business and international relief work. He was more accustomed to issuing orders to subordinates than he was to the give and take of practical politics; he was out of touch with the American public mood; and he inherited the presidency from the top rather than winning it through the usual channels of the American political career. He was, in an unhappy sense for an American politician, something of an intellectual; and in a man of his temper and experience this could mean only that he was a doctrinaire. He became the centre of another episode in the long history of the American conservative's inability to conserve.

Mr. Schlesinger, tracing the course of Hoover's failure, spares him very little. Unwilling to see the depression as the consequence of any serious imperfections in the structure of the American economy, Hoover insisted first that it was the result of overspeculation in Wall Street, then that its main causes lay entirely outside the United States. Determined to deny that there was anything wrong with traditional American notions of self-help and local initiative, he kept the federal government out of the task of unemployment relief and let suffering go to disas-

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trous lengths. Resolved not to toy with any of the inherited verities, he defended the protective tariff to the end and all too symbolically upheld the gold standard on the ground (among others) that gold was "enshrined in human instincts for over 10,000 years." Since his course must be right, he was unable to take cognisance of any evidence that proved it wrong. In June, 1930, when a delegation came to him to urge an expansion of federal public works, he met them with the reply: "Gentlemen, you have come sixty days too late. The depression is over." As for the pathetic figures who stood on street corners trying to make a living by selling apples, Hoover could still assert years afterwards: "Many persons left their jobs for the more profitable one of selling apples." "Nobody is actually starving," he assured a reporter during the depths of the distress. "The hoboes, for example, are better fed than they have ever been. One hobo in New York gets ten meals a day." He began to put more and more stock in the chimerical notion that nothing was lacking but confidence and morale. "What the country needs," he said early in 1931, "is a good, big laugh.... If someone could get off a good joke every ten days, I think our troubles would be over."

That Hoover never really responded to the American public seems clear from his own utterances. As he lost control of the situation, he grew increasingly irritable, complained to newspaper publishers about reporters whose stories displeased him, and began to cancel his press conferences until in the end he was holding hardly more than one a month. When a straggling group of veterans and unemployed marched on Washington and camped in its vacant lots, Hoover denied himself the opportunity either to inform himself or to blunt the edge of their despair by seeing their leaders. His reason was that he was too busy, though he found time during the same period to give audience to the heavyweight wrestling champion and delegates from a national sorority, among other purely ceremonial visitors. Instead he had the army, under General MacArthur, drive the veterans out with bayonets and tear gas. After this indiscretion, he could still make the mistake of exclaiming during a 1932 campaign speech, "Thank God, we still have a government in Washington that knows how to deal with the mob." In his memoirs he has left a final statement of his own view of public service under a democracy: "Democracy is not a polite employer. The only way out of elective office is to get sick or die or get kicked out."

DURING the twenties, when Hoover was looking at the world from the vantage point of the Secretaryship of Commerce, Roosevelt was undergoing a different education. For years he fought a trying battle with the ravages of his poliomyelitis, which hardened his character while it softened his human sympathies. In his public life he learned the techniques of conciliation as Hoover was never to learn them. The Democratic party was hopelessly split during this decade between its rural, fundamentalist, and nativist wing and its urban, immigrant, Catholic wing led by Al Smith; Roosevelt was one of the very few Democrats who managed to maintain some measure of cordial relations with both sides. It was this gift for the genial straddle, together with his reputation for moderate liberalism, that made him so prominent a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination of 1932.

Mr. Schlesinger is a bit disposed to slight those aspects of Roosevelt's career that have interested some of Roosevelt's critics—not least among them his participation in the hollow optimism of the 1920s and his penchant for easy-going business schemes. But the man Mr. Schlesinger gives us, as he carries his story through an excellent account of Roosevelt's campaign for the nomination and the presidency, is not presented in a spirit of complete indulgence. Mr. Schlesinger sees in his subject greater hardness and more complexity than many previous writers have seen. Roosevelt "enjoyed people," he writes, "but rarely gave himself to them. Detachment endowed him with a capacity for craftiness in politics and for calculation, sometimes even for cruelty, in human relations. Those who loved him best he teased most mercilessly. Nearly everybody was expendable. As he could be insouciant and shallow intellectually, so he could be tricky and evasive morally. He seemed soft and complaisant, but he was terribly hard inside." No doubt it was this very hardness and moral evasiveness that protected him from the fierce physical and psychic demands of the presidency and en-

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abled him to survive for as long as twelve years under a public burden the like of which perhaps no man but Winston Churchill has carried in the modern Western world.

Mr. Schlesinger's volume gains so rapidly in momentum and interest as it moves forward to the present, that we may look forward to the remaining volumes as parts of one of the most imposing historical enterprises of our time. My sole quarrel with its interpretations bears on the author's view of the campaign of 1932. Here Mr. Schlesinger, while admitting Roosevelt's evasiveness, prefers to emphasise the extent to which his presidential programme was prefigured in his campaign utterances. Roosevelt "had a powerful instinct about direction and a considerable range of commitment to policies," he argues, and he enumerates a number of propositions on which Roosevelt was "perfectly clear." The issue is of some importance because it could affect the more general problem with which the author will undoubtedly deal in his later volumes—the question of the improvisatory character of the New Deal. Contemporaries felt—and it still seems to me that they were fundamentally right—that Roosevelt gave only the vaguest indication of his intentions in his campaign utterances. As Mr. Schlesinger remarks, he did make it clear that he stood for a far more positive conception of the rôle of government than had been professed by Hoover or any previous president. But he was astute enough to see that a victory over Hoover could be had without many specific commitments. He left serious doubts as to how the positive power of government would be used. On the vital issue of inflation he was silent; on the tariff he was so equivocal that Mr. Hoover, quite justly, called him a "chameleon on plaid"; on agriculture he did not venture far beyond realities; and when he vigorously denounced the Hoover administration for its spending and called for a twenty-five per cent reduction in the budget, his audience might well have wondered how some of the specific reforms to which he *had* committed himself were to be financed. Out of sheer necessity, the New Deal had to be more of an improvisation than a plan, and I am confident that Mr. Schlesinger's subsequent volumes will not neglect the gorgeous political virtuosity that went into its making.

Richard Hofstadter

A EUROPEAN TRAGEDY

ALL THE classic definitions of tragedy seem as if they had been formulated expressly for the story of Hungary in 1956. When Bradley wrote the following, he had in mind only Shakespearian tragedy, but Shakespeare will do until greater tragedy comes along:

> "We see a number of human beings placed in certain circumstances; and we see, arising from the co-operation of their characters in these circumstances, certain actions. These actions beget others, and these others beget others again, until this series of inter-connected deeds leads by an apparently inevitable sequence to a catastrophe. The effect of such a series on imagination is to make us regard the sufferings which accompany it, and the catastrophe in which it ends, not only or chiefly as something which happens to the persons concerned, but equally as something which is caused by them. This at least may be said of the principal persons, and, among them, of the hero, who always contributes in some measure to the disaster in which he perishes."

Circumstance and character: these are the constituent elements of tragedy. And in particular, circumstances over which the principal characters have no control, either because of their own defects or because the circumstances are of their very nature uncontrollable. This latter they may be in two different ways: either because events have already taken their fatal shape before the principal characters come on the stage at all, or because they are the product of mere chance. Quite apart from their own characters, Orestes and Oedipus were the victims of fatalities determined before their birth; Othello and Phèdre were the victims of fatal coincidence. Whoever was the hero of the Hungarian tragedy of 1956 was doubly doomed, by more than one fatality of both kinds.

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It is now possible to look back upon the catastrophe of last November and see, in all objectivity, why it was inevitable. But in doing so we must first recognise that none of us has the right to address the people of Hungary on the subject except on bended knee: others abide our question. For all these tasks—history, homage, exegesis, criticism, judgment—the collection of documentary material made by Mr. Melvin J. Lasky* is, and is likely to remain permanently, indispensable. Short of opening the Soviet archives (the Western archives being already virtually open in all relevant respects), it is difficult to imagine anything still lacking to our appreciation of the completeness of the tragedy. It may be that there are men in Moscow able, from more detailed knowledge, to savour more perfectly than we can the tragic irony, in the technical Greek sense of the term. But there is irony enough for us already in the story developed day by day in Mr. Lasky's collection of what was said and written in public at the time.

LIKE ALL great tragedies, the Hungarian tragedy did not begin only when the curtain went up; still less did it begin only when the unlucky Nagy stepped on to the stage. He was, in fact, as we can now see (and as perhaps one acute Yugoslav observer, Dr. Vlajko Begovic, saw in part before the event) at that moment already doubly doomed, by circumstance—to say nothing of character. He personally was doomed by the curious and ironic fact, which Mr. Lasky's documents conclusively demonstrate without explaining, that the government which immediately preceded his had invoked the aid of Soviet troops as its last known act in office a few hours before resigning. Nagy seems to have been painfully slow to realise how damning was this coincidence; and when he began to deny the ugly rumour that it was he who had called for Soviet help, it was already too late to shake the incubus off his shoulders. But even without this personal miniature disaster, prior events in the larger time-scale had already doomed the Hungarian revolution before it began.

If there was one thing more than another which made the Hungarian revolution hopeless from the start, it was the very thing which precipitated it: the success of the revolution in Poland. Again and again the Hungarians insisted that they were not just imitating the Poles, but finding their own true course, just as the Poles have insisted that they were not just following in the Yugoslavs' footsteps. And of course all of them have insisted throughout, with a ferocity of moral indignation which is still difficult to comprehend in the West, that they were not conducting a "counter-revolution": that is a "smear-word" as much to the Hungarian revolutionaries as to *Pravda*. But from the Russian point of view these claims simply could not be accepted, since to accept them would be to accept the dissolution of the Soviet empire. And the answer to the question, why could not the Russians concede to the Hungarians what they had already conceded to the Poles, is quite simply because they had already conceded it to the Poles.

The argument that an imperial power must "draw the line somewhere" in the concessions it makes to claims of independence is not one which should be difficult in principle to understand in the West. It is the principle on which the French refuse to give up Algeria after losing Tunisia and Morocco. The same principle plays a part in the British stand over Cyprus. To strain at the gnat after swallowing the camel, however reprehensible on scriptural authority, is at least an understandable human reaction. And the Hungarian uprising was a good deal more than a gnat. It is humanly certain that, as Professor Seton-Watson points out in his introduction to Mr. Lasky's book, the Russians still have a heavy price to pay in their own country for what they did in Hungary. But as a matter of pure practical logic, leaving ethics aside, they were in a hideous dilemma; and the price of impaling themselves on the other horn, by letting Hungary withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, might well have been higher than that of the horn they chose. At least their choice was not illogical.

MR. LASKY'S documentation shows even more dramatically than the original chaotic succession of contemporary reports the terrible working-out of the inescapable tragedy in which the Russians had involved themselves and Eastern Europe. It also shows, though naturally with less emphasis and detail, the working-out of the simultaneous tragedy which was going on in the Western capitals and the Middle East. Each drama seemed to the participants in the other no more than a sub-plot of their own. This is a familiar human failing. (Readers of Wolfgang Leonhard's *Die Revolution entlässt ihre Kinder* will observe that, living in East Berlin throughout the crisis of the "air-lift" in 1948–9, he and his friends were entirely preoccupied with the Yugoslav quarrel with the Cominform.) Thus, the first mention of the Suez Canal crisis in Mr. Lasky's book comes under the date 27th October, though the report was not published till 7th January, and may thus owe something to later retrospect: it records the now-familiar

* *The Hungarian Revolution*. Edited by MELVIN J. LASKY. Published for The Congress for Cultural Freedom by Secker & Warburg. 25s.

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story that the Russian troops in Budapest thought they were in the Canal Zone. But so interlocked were the two crises that it is impossible to separate them, and one of the most crucial questions in analysing the tragedy of 1956 is, which had the more decisive influence on the other.

Perhaps the answer is neither, as some with a guilty conscience over the Anglo-French intervention console themselves by arguing. More likely the answer is that we shall never know. We have perhaps as much decisive evidence on the matter already as is likely to be published in our lifetimes; and the study of a comparative chronology (such as that published in *The World To-day* last December) or a comparison of *Les Secrets de l'Expédition d'Egypte*, by the Bromberger brothers, with Mr. Lasky's book may be the nearest that we shall ever get to the exact sequence of cause and effect. The most interesting fresh contribution brought out by Mr. Lasky is an article published in December in the German military journal, *Wehrkunde*. This sums up and rounds off the tragic story, and offers two suggestive deductions. The first of these is that the Soviet decision to intervene in full force must have been taken not later than the night of 27th/28th October, and perhaps as early as the 24th. The second is that, even if the earlier date is correct, the Red Army's effort was mounted with phenomenal speed and skill. It must, in fact, have absorbed not only a high proportion of the active strength of the Red Army (the author puts it at one fifth), but also a very high (perhaps much higher) proportion of Soviet planning capacity and resources. It may well be questioned whether a simultaneous Soviet intervention in the Middle East was technically feasible; and those who argue (as the Bromberger brothers still do) that a Soviet intervention in the Middle East was imminent at the end of October, may well feel that we owe it to Hungary rather than to the Anglo-French intervention that this never took place.

This particular coincidence of events is one of the circumstances whose precise rôle can probably never be assessed. But there was another set of coincidences in the West to which we can hardly deny a crucial rôle. This was the coincidence of the American elections, in which Eisenhower's rôle as the peace-maker was at stake, with the illness of both Dulles and Eden at the height of the twin crises. It is almost impossible to imagine a more disastrous conjunction of circumstances for Hungary's heroic gesture of independence. The mind boggles at the task of inventing further ironies to pile on top of those which fortune heaped up in the last week of October and the first of November. If Shakespeare had devised the plot, Bradley would of course have been lost in admiration; but he might well have doubted whether Shakespeare had not gone too far for his audience's endurance.

STILL, Bradley would perhaps have missed one thing, at least on first examination. Who was the hero? He is indeed hard to find. It is impossible to compare Nagy or Cardinal Mindszenty even with Gomulka and Cardinal Wyszynsky: they are not heroic but pathetic, and their personal performances are revealed in Mr. Lasky's book as sadly below the level of events. None of the names that dominated the headlines for a few days can fully qualify for the rôle: not the soldier Pal Maleter, who went tamely into a trap which a hundred precedents warned him against; not the intellectual George Lukacs, who inspired others to revolt, and then hedged, and finally made his peace with Kadar; not Kadar certainly, unless great traitors can be great heroes; nor any of the local leaders, whose fate (such is the poverty of human memory) are now recalled only when the Kadar régime brings them up for vilification and vengeance. There is a case for Istvan Bibo, Minister of State in Nagy's government, who refused to surrender when the Soviet tanks advanced on Parliament Square, and is last seen in Mr. Lasky's book "entrenched with a machine-gun on the second floor" of the cabinet building, to demonstrate by personal sacrifice before the world what the Soviet forces were doing. Victor Hugo, who declared General Cambronne to have been the victor of Waterloo, would have had no doubt who was the hero of Budapest. But the truth is that it was none of these people. It was the Hungarian people themselves.

Like all great tragedies, the Hungarian revolution leaves us speculating on its moral. We shall all draw from it the morals we prefer. The Russians must have learned that indoctrination doesn't work, and that Communism contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, just as they tell us capitalism does; but in public they will continue to rant about "counter-revolution." The Americans have learned that, unless they are prepared to go up to, and over, the "brink of war," they cannot coerce their enemies but only their friends. We have all learned that human nature can be both greater and viler than we had grown inured to believing. But like all great tragedies, this one too does nothing to point a way to action: our souls are purged with pity and terror, but not enriched with practical reason. Take one example. Suppose that tomorrow one could go to the British government and say: "I am in touch with an organisation which could precipitate a revolution in Russia and destroy the Communist régime." What

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would the answer be?—"For God's sake tell them to lay off and do nothing! Better the Devil we know than the one we don't!" The more certain the prospect of success, the more emphatic would be that answer; and who can say it would be wrong? That is the substance of the real tragedy that Hungary has revealed to us: that even presented with a ready-made revolution in our own favour behind the Iron Curtain, we do not know what to do with it.

C. M. Woodhouse

THE AFFAIR HISS

THE story of Alger Hiss has already achieved a grim sort of immortality. From the time his name burst into headlines during the summer of 1948, it became a storm centre not only of legal but political issues. This case more than any other focused the attention of the United States upon the problem of security in high places. Together with a succession of other dramatic events, like the confession and conviction of Klaus Fuchs and Harry Gold, the arrest of Judith Coplon, a parade of former Government officials who invoked the privilege against self-incrimination in answer to questions about espionage, it created a climate of opinion in which the very word "spy," as Alistair Cooke once graphically put it, "came to lose its alien attributes and be allowed as a possible rôle even for a Yale or Harvard man in a Brooks Brothers suit." Life among government officials has never been the same since the Hiss case.

More fateful still were the political repercussions. The Hiss case was seized upon in some Republican quarters as a pretext and golden opportunity to indict the New Deal, Truman's leadership of the Democratic party, and the main course of American policy toward the Soviet Union, especially at Yalta and Potsdam. On the other hand, many who rushed to Mr. Hiss's defence without familiarising themselves with the detailed evidence did so on the assumption that loyalty to the New Deal demanded it. Political partisanship on both sides obscured the basic issue, which was and is one of truth and justice. Here, not passion but the calm assessment of evidence is our best guide.

Having lost his day in the court of law, Mr. Hiss now in this book* takes his case to the court of public opinion. He appeals from the verdict of the jury which found him guilty of perjury on two counts: first, denying that he had transmitted secret government documents to a confessed Communist agent; second, denying that he had seen and spoken to this agent, Whittaker Chambers, in February and March 1938. The first charge was the more important one morally. For if Mr. Hiss were guilty of the formal charge of perjury with respect to it, then he was also guilty of espionage (on which the statute of limitations had run out and for which he could not be prosecuted). In his book Mr. Hiss is appealing, not only from the verdict of the jury which convicted him, but from the opinion of the Court of Appeals which twice refused to reverse the decision, from the U.S. Supreme Court (which found no issue involved that warranted a review), from Judge Henry W. Goddard's denial of a motion for a new, third trial, and from the refusals of the Court of Appeals and U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the denial or review it.

MR. HISS sets forth in full detail the arguments and evidence, both old and new, which he believes establish his innocence and which justified his motion for a new trial. Some of the main points are the following:

First, he explains his failure to recognise the pictures of Mr. Chambers as "Crosley," the man he claims to have had a casual acquaintanceship with, as due to the fact that the pictures of Mr. Chambers shown him did not correspond with his memory of Crosley. He charges the House Committee on Un-American Activities with bad faith in not arranging the confrontation, designed to discover who was lying about whom, sooner than it did.

Second, he disputes the theory of "close association" between Mr. Chambers and himself. He cites several instances in which Mr. Chambers is mistaken about Alger Hiss and his family. For example, Mr. Chambers assumed that Mrs. Hiss was of Quaker origin because she was active in the Society of Friends. Actually her family was Presbyterian. Mr. Chambers did not know her middle initial. Moreover, the true things Mr. Chambers knew about the Hisses he could have learned from *Who's Who* or asking around. The same is alleged about Mrs. Chambers' testimony.

Third, Mr. Hiss points to what he claims are major discrepancies all along the line in Whittaker Chambers' story, especially his date of

* *In the Court of Public Opinion*. By ALGER HISS. John Calder. 25s.

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breaking with the Communist party. This has a crucial significance for the charge that Mr. Hiss gave him secret papers, since some of these papers are dated after Mr. Chambers allegedly broke.

Fourth, Mr. Hiss denies that he gave his old Ford car to the Communist party through an intermediary, denies that he loaned Mr. Chambers $400 to help him buy a new car, and charges the F.B.I. with collusion here as elsewhere in aiding Mr. Chambers to frame him; admits receiving a rug from Mr. Chambers, but at a date earlier than Mr. Chambers alleges to have sent it, and in return for innocent favours, not as a token of recognition by the Soviet régime for his services, as Mr. Chambers charged.

Fifth, the handwritten notes of Alger Hiss, which Mr. Chambers produced at the Baltimore libel hearing, Mr. Hiss declares unimportant memoranda which easily could have been stolen from his office. The originals of the microfilms (the pumpkin papers) he alleges are either file carbon copies from an office in the State Department different from Francis B. Sayre's, where Mr. Hiss worked, or were stolen from Mr. Sayre's office. In either case, Henry Julian Wadleigh, who confessed to giving Chambers documents, worked in the Trade Agreements Section, where, Mr. Hiss claims, most of these documents originated.

Finally, and most important, there is the new evidence about the typewritten documents. They, too, were also part of the Baltimore papers produced by Mr. Chambers. They were widely regarded as the most damaging pieces of evidence against Mr. Hiss at the trials and the most difficult for him to explain, since both sides admitted that they were typed by the same typewriter which was used for authentic letters of Mrs. Hiss. When he was sentenced, Mr. Hiss vowed he would not rest until he proved that forgery by typewriter had been committed by Whittaker Chambers. Mr. Hiss now offers affidavits alleging newly-discovered evidence that forgery by typewriter is possible; and that the typewriter he himself originally introduced into evidence, believing it to be the genuine Hiss typewriter, is a forgery. He asserts that the crucial typewritten documents were prepared on the forged typewriter which was then substituted for the original Hiss typewriter. His counsel remarks "it would have been most natural, when the work of duplicating and forging was completed, to return the duplicate in place of the original as a meaning of increasing the deception." Mr. Hiss alleges that this forgery and substitution were done by Mr. Chambers. He admits he doesn't know how and when it was done, but firmly asserts it was done.

As against this new statement of Mr. Hiss's case, there is the testimony of the trials and the argument of the briefs entered in answer to Mr. Hiss's appeals and to his motion for a new trial. No reader can properly assess his book without taking note of them. Not unnaturally, since his statement is *ex parte*, Mr. Hiss gives neither an adequate nor a fair summary of the government's case.

First, the government argued that Mr. Hiss's treatment of "Crosley" was incompatible with the claim that the latter was merely a hard-to-remember acquaintance. One does not commonly give a furnished apartment at cost, with free utilities, throw in a car, lend money although the rent remains unpaid, to a total stranger representing himself as a freelance writer who has no accreditation or assignment from anyone and has never published a line. When Mr. Hiss said to the House committee that the name of Chambers "means absolutely nothing to me," he had already been questioned about Mr. Chambers by the F.B.I. and by a grand jury, and had been told about Mr. Chambers' charge by a legal friend. Further, although no one knew Mr. Chambers as "Crosley," others knew him as "Carl," under which name Mr. Chambers claimed he was known to Mr. Hiss.

Second, the government held that what Mr. Chambers verifiably knew about the Hisses established a close association, although he may have been mistaken about various details. Although Mr. Chambers could have learned from *Who's Who* that Mr. Hiss was an ornithologist, he could not have learned from anybody but Mr. Hiss himself that he had on one fine day, seen a prothonatory warbler.

Third, Mr. Chambers' break with the Party was gradual. The government argued that he may have erred in fixing the exact time, but answering affidavits are introduced to support the allegation that it was on or about April 15th, 1938, which is late enough to cover all the incriminating documents.

Fourth, the government held that Mr. Hiss couldn't have given his old Ford to Mr. Chambers when he said he did, that title to it was ultimately transferred to a Mr. William Rosen, an alleged Communist functionary (who invoked the Fifth Amendment to questions about it). It argued that Mr Hiss's explanation of the withdrawal of $400 from his savings account a few days before Mr. Chambers alleged he received it was implausible. It was proved that four rugs were bought and sent by Mr. Chambers, who alleged that they were Soviet gifts to his secret contacts, Messrs. Hiss, Harry Dexter White, Wadleigh, and Abraham G. Silverman.

Fifth, the government claimed that Mr. Hiss had access to the documents which were micro-

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filmed and there is no evidence that anyone else stole them or the hand-written notes.

Sixth, government experts, including F.B.I. technicians, denied that forgery by typewriter is possible; they denied that the Woodstock typewriter produced in court by Mr. Hiss was a forgery. Counsel for the government asserted that Mr. Chambers would have had to be a veritable Benvenuto Cellini of the typewriter to do in six weeks, at most three months, what the defence's experts swear it took a battery of highly skilled craftsmen more than a year to do. Further, if—as Mr. Hiss claims—Mr. Chambers stole the original typewriter and duplicated it, Mr. Chambers must have had access to the original. Why, then, didn't he forge the papers on the original Hiss machine and replace it, instead of going to the great trouble of building a new one and planting it on Mr. Hiss, not even knowing that Mr. Hiss would produce it? (Even if the original were unworkable, it could more easily be repaired than duplicated entire.) On the other hand, had Mr. Chambers fabricated the typewriter from typescript specimens from the original Hiss machine, he would have had to know where to plant it in place of the original and to take the original machine away lest it turn up after he planted the fabrication. Once more, if he were able to have access to the original, why should he need to forge a new typewriter?

WHAT is to be made of all this?

Take the last point first. The government's reply seems to go to the heart of the matter and it is extremely puzzling that Hiss makes no rejoinder to it. For unless challenged, it makes all the new evidence about the "forged" typewriter irrelevant. Mr. Chambers would have had to be a perfect idiot to forge a typewriter when he had access to the original.

With respect to aspects of the other evidence, there are two cogent points Mr. Hiss makes. The first is that there were definite discrepancies in some of the dates given by Whittaker Chambers in recounting his dealings with Alger Hiss, and in describing the details of the latter's life and home, as evidence of closeness of association. The second is that the case was tried too much in the newspapers and this may have predisposed some readers, especially of the sensationalist press, against him.

But discrepancies in testimony relating to matters which happened many years ago are not necessarily signs of deception. A well-conned story that never wavers in any particular may be more suspect. The discrepancies in Mr. Chambers' story can easily be matched with discrepancies in Mr. Hiss's. If Mr. Chambers did not know as much as he claimed to know

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about Mr. Hiss, he knew far too much to be the casual acquaintance Mr. Hiss professed him to be. And while it is true that newspaper publicity may have prejudiced some potential jurors against Mr. Hiss, it is also true that up to the time of the trial, prejudice against Mr. Chambers, a confessed ex-Communist and Soviet agent, was even stronger. In any case, the logic of the evidence when recollected in judicial tranquillity does not depend upon some deplorable habits of the American press. In his motion for a new trial, Mr. Hiss's counsel admitted in oral argument that there was evidence in the record "legally sufficient to sustain a verdict of guilty," although he believed his client innocent, especially in the light of new evidence.

Aside from the documentary material, there is the fact that Mr. Hiss has been identified as a Communist, not by one but by three independent witnesses—the Chambers, counting them as one, Mrs. Hedda Massing, and Mr. Nathaniel Weyl (although his testimony came after the trials). Mr. Hiss's attempt to explain away the testimony of the latter two as motivated by a desire for publicity is not very persuasive.

Clearly, the basic issue is not Mr. Chambers' veracity alone against Mr. Hiss's. Even assuming it were, there is an internal psychological difficulty in Mr. Hiss's defence. He would have us believe that Mr. Chambers is a pathological liar adept in improvising fantasies. Why, then, is he compelled to admit that many things Mr. Chambers says are true? He sometimes does this to get away from Mr. Chambers' accusing finger—for example, when he reminds us that Mr. Chambers had other sources, aside from Mr. Wadleigh, that could have supplied him with the material he said he received from Mr. Hiss. He must therefore believe that Mr. Chambers is telling the truth about important espionage activities. We know also that of the people Mr. Chambers identified originally, only the Hisses made denials; one admitted later that he was in a Communist cell with Mr. Chambers (Lee Pressman), and the others invoked the Fifth Amendment. A later identification (Wadleigh) confessed to long and extensive espionage.

At least in large part Mr. Chambers must have been telling the truth, whatever the reasons for his not telling all of it. Why, then, did Mr. Chambers single out Hiss, especially, to frame? Why did Mrs. Massing and Mr. Weyl also do so? Mr. Hiss leaves this utterly mysterious, and the one hypothesis which explains matters most plausibly was evidently drawn by the jury.

A FINAL word about the writing of the book. It has a curiously flat quality. Mr. Hiss almost succeeds in making the Hiss case dull, except to experts. *In the Court of Public Opinion* has no warmth or colour, and contains little about Mr. Hiss's life, thought, and the drama of his downfall. One misses the passionate protest and burning sense of outrage usually found in the writings of those who consider themselves victimised. Nor is there the icy logic of unassailable argument, which sometimes conveys the same feeling.

This does not, however, bear upon the logic of the evidence. It seems safe to predict that in the future sufficiently new evidence will be discovered to resolve the last lingering doubts about Mr. Hiss's guilt or innocence.

Sidney Hook

THE SEX WAR

THE history of the enfranchisement of women in England excellently illustrates the lack of political realism which has bedevilled so many reforming movements in this country. With logic, commonsense, and morality on their side, the advocates of votes for women seldom and then tardily grasped the essential balance of power either between the political parties or between the social classes—the very balance upon which parliamentary victory for their cause inevitably depended. On the other hand, the practised politicians and the skilled masters of power manœuvres equally failed to understand the gradual but inevitably overwhelming force of deeply-felt injustice. This mutual incomprehension, as so often, meant that votes for women were only gained and acceded after the maximum display of extravagance, folly, and violent emotion.

It is the chief merit of Mr. Fulford's excellent book* that he has constructed his narrative with

* *Votes for Women*. By ROGER FULFORD. Faber and Faber. 25s.

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all its variety, pathos, and humour firmly upon a central framework of this mutual failure to comprehend. It is not necessary to propose a dogmatically Marxist interpretation of historical causation to see that the political struggle for the female vote was the last great bourgeois revolutionary movement. By the latter half of the 19th century the advocates of female suffrage stood between two prejudices. From the Tory party, in spite of many individual Tory sympathisers including Disraeli, they could not hope for much because here the ancient sexual prejudice still reigned supreme. Among radicals, on the other hand, the established view of women's subordination only found favour with a few eccentrics like Labouchère; nevertheless the Liberal Party and later the Labour Party became increasingly disturbed at the prospect of swelling the Tory electorate by granting the vote to women property owners. Gladstone, on this issue, is seen at his worst during one of the debates on female suffrage that came forward so regularly and so hopelessly in the last Victorian decades: he spoke with two voices and then abstained from voting. Keir Hardie, by contrast, was on the point of leaving the Labour Party in 1907 when a conference dropped women's suffrage in favour of adult universal suffrage. The class attitude, indeed, is shown most clearly in the speech of a woman—Margaret Bondfield: a leading suffragist had said that the quickest way to get a working-class vote was to give votes to women. "I entirely disagree," said Miss Bondfield. "I say good luck to them and may they get it. But don't let them come and tell me that they are working for my class."

These motives of political expediency or class interest remained largely unintelligible to the suffragists; and, indeed, as the long fight passed from the attrition of yearly bills to the all-out onslaught of militant tactics, they came to see such lukewarmness as treachery. It was this disgust with the trimming of the Liberal Party that led to the campaign—electoral and personal—against the Liberal Government in the years of militancy. The suffragists were able to cite the example of the Irish party in directing their attacks against the government of the day. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to think that an exceptional emotion of hostility towards the Liberal cabinet existed; in particular, of course, towards Asquith, the very type of moderation, considered action, and temporising most alien to the out-and-out views of the WSPU. It was this feeling, too, in great degree that no doubt urged Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel in their continuous progress from the bohemian radicalism of Dr. Pankhurst to the respectability of their conservative latter days. It is very possible that if the militants had still been susceptible to compromise they could have received women's suffrage from Asquith as part of a measure for the general extension of the vote. But by this time such a gesture seemed to Mrs. Pankhurst and her followers a cowardly attempt of the Government to get out of an impasse without specifically recognising the injustice under which women laboured. Men had waged the sex war for centuries, now they were trying to get out of it by lumping it in with other social issues. Very well, women could wage the sex war in their turn.

It is easy to be impatient with such lack of political insight, with the emotionalism that preferred heroics and martyrdom. It is easy to point out that Mrs. Fawcett and the Constitutionalists had greater realism or that Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel had developed a sinister *Führerprinzip* that drove in turn Mrs. Despard and the Pethick Lawrences from their side. It is easy to suggest that militancy retarded rather than hastened the Great Day. One of the merits of Mr. Fulford's book is that by its wide historical survey it puts this militant extravagance into a just perspective and corrects so easy a judgment. A less sagacious and responsible author would have plunged the reader straight into the comedy-melodrama of the militant campaign, but the arson, the stonethrowing, the suicide

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beneath the royal horse's hoofs and all the other extravagances have their origin in the squalid, contemptuous, contemptible treatment of the suffragists in the earlier decades when they had sought enfranchisement by peaceful means. The folly that led Miss Kitty Marion, the actress, to tug a fire alarm because she "wanted to get the government out" stems directly from the folly of men who year after year talked out the moderate, logical bills presented to the House with facetious, insulting hours of filibustering. Nor is it so certain that forcible feeding and cat and mouse arrests, however emotionally and unhealthily sought by some of the sufferers, did not reach the conscience of the country at large where logic and good manners had failed. The Great War, in fact, came perhaps very timely for the opponents of suffrage, because it enabled them to present the vote to women with a pat on the head for their splendid patriotism instead of being forced to present it at the point of a hatpin. Much of the women's struggle must seem absurdly beside the point to the historian who understands the social forces of the age, but it is perhaps the historian who is superficial rather than the idealist.

ON THIS fundamental analysis of the women's suffrage movement Mr. Fulford is brilliant. Indeed there are only two particulars in which I found *Votes for Women* a little inadequate. The general prejudice against women in public affairs was so old and so entrenched by Victoria's reign that to have attempted its analysis would perhaps have required another whole book. The supporters of suffrage might point to the abbesses summoned to medieval parliaments, but the occasions were few and representation in medieval times was hardly regarded as a privilege. Nor could the occasional powers exercised by noblewomen be regarded as any real exception to the general position of women—the aristocracy had its own ways. Prejudice against women's political power could, of course, be found in the highest class, but it was above all the middle classes who held that prejudice as a religious article. It was by no means only the reactionary in the mid-19th century who found women's political activities disgusting and ridiculous. Charles Dickens, whose genius so strangely reflected the ordinary view, speaks his mind on the subject in *Bleak House* in a passage the author might well have cited. Mr. Fulford deals so fascinatingly with William Thompson, Miss Cobbe, Miss Becker, John Stuart Mill, and other Victorian pioneers of the movement, that he might happily have found room for a full analysis of one of the typical opponents of the women's cause. It is, in fact, this failure to give scope to the analysis of individuals, imposed no doubt by the dimensions of his book, that produces the second and greater defect of Mr. Fulford's book. He represents the last days of the militant struggle—and rightly, I am sure—as dominated by the personalities of Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel. Further he shows that in their imaginations, at any rate, Herbert Asquith was the spirit of oppression incarnate. He does not, however, sufficiently explain or expose the characters in this strange warfare. What lay beneath the sweet charm, the courageous beauty of this mother and daughter that turned them into leaders of inflexible will and emotional tyranny? What was the seed of their ambition and their urge towards social grandeur? Considerations of the feeling of living people, no doubt, influenced his somewhat sparse treatment of this subject, but it is nevertheless a real defect in an otherwise excellent book that the Pankhursts, including the very sympathetic Sylvia, remain not perhaps mysteries, but at any rate adumbrations of vital personalities. Nor does Mr. Fulford, despite his evident and understandable admiration for Asquith, really treat sufficiently the causes of the great statesman's amusing but laconic and therefore infuriating attitude to the women's claims. Asquith's charm lends a rosy but false hue to the distasteful policy of the Government; the Pankhursts' intolerance does less than justice to their righteous cause. Such a paradox deserves fuller treatment than it gets in Mr. Fulford's very rewarding and entertaining study of a period that seems so remote because it has only just ceased to be part of our experience.

Angus Wilson

IN BRIEF

Emergence from Chaos. By STUART HOLROYD. *Gollancz.* 18*s.*

THIS is going to be a very personal review, and I don't like writing it. Repeatedly, whenever I have met him, Mr. Stuart Holroyd has struck me as an unusually intelligent, modest, and cultivated young man. His book, unfortunately, displays none of these qualities, unless it be in homeopathic doses. He seems to have written it with a truncheon rather than a pen.

"In its propagandist aspect this book is an attack on humanism," writes Mr. Holroyd in his Introduction. Yet the first sentence of his first chapter reads: "Religion is not so much man's attempt to know God as his attempt to

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know himself." And so he continues. God is seen as something subservient to man, a kind of universal spiritual masseur, probably powered by electricity derived from fission. To someone who, like myself, is interested enough in Calvin to realise that even he was a humanist, Mr. Holroyd sounds like the final humanistic lunacy.

So much for intelligence. Of T. S. Eliot's religious allegiance, he writes: "Those who are inclined to believe that this act (i.e. Eliot's conversion) constituted an abdication of his position as a truly modern man, and who suspect that he did it for the sake of the comfort and security that are to be found by the individual who joins the Church, will, I hope, suspend judgment on these matters at least until they have read the present chapter." I am not "inclined to believe" that Eliot has abdicated: I *do* believe it with every particle of belief that I can summon. But has Eliot lost his tongue? Or does Mr. Holroyd's exposition of Anglo-Catholicism so much surpass, in clarity and persuasiveness, all that Eliot himself has written that I really have to "suspend judgment"? It is a large claim: Mr. Holroyd does not substantiate it. (Anyhow, nobody does suspend judgment: choosing a religion is not like choosing a piece of crockery: one does not use religion: one is used by it.)

And of such stuff is the modesty of this book made. As for understanding, Mr. Holroyd accepts uncritically the idea that Walt Whitman was "too clean" to go to bed with women. That Whitman was homosexual never seems to enter his head.

Such naïve pomposity does not fit in with the man I know. There are passages of straight analysis, of Eliot and of Thomas, even of Rilke, that seem to be more in character. They, at least, show that Mr. Holroyd has read the authors he writes about with the vivid care of the very young, the concentration that can never afterwards be repeated. But he has felt compelled to puff up his genuine insights with portentous religiosity and to express them in a schoolmastery jargon that might have been all very well in the Sixth Form but just won't do when life is the examination. And, indeed, that is probably the basic trouble. Mr. Holroyd's mind is quite obviously of the kind that can absorb a good deal of experience, that needs years to mature. In this he differs from the figure with whom he will inevitably be compared, Mr. Colin Wilson. That is why, in spite of all I have said, he is probably a more promising writer than Mr. Wilson. But he does need these years. No publisher should have pushed him out to face the critical blizzard without them.

Burns Singer

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ABOUT OUR AUTHORS

Stephen Spender writes: "ENGAGED IN WRITING started off as an experiment in writing a story like a collage: one of those paintings in which the artist exercises his fantasy in superimposing his own invention on pasted-up news clippings. In March, 1956, I attended at Venice a meeting of intellectuals, from East and West, who discussed endlessly the themes of Realism and Engagement. During this discussion, it struck me that there were lives actually involved in the reality which they were talking about in such an abstract way. Hence my idea of imposing a 'real fiction' on an unreal but actual discussion. There were many objections to such an idea, the greatest being that it attached a story which was invented, to reportage which is journalistic. All I can say is that it challenged me, and I could not do anything else until I had attempted to carry it out."

Laurie Lee has written the following account of himself. The editors, having investigated further, find that every single fact is literally true:

"He was born in Stroud, Gloucestershire, during a time of long drought. He has seven brothers and sisters, nine tattooed uncles, and sixty-four cousins. His mother kept "The Plough" at Sheepscombe and his father composed hymn-tunes by mathematical formula. He ran away from all this when he was nineteen and came up to London via Ascot and Slough—a foot-journey which took him a month. He has been running, at the same speed, ever since. He was first tossed by a bull at the age of six, was knocked down by a bicycle the following year, saw his first air-zeppelin in Almeria Bay, and had his first poems published in *Horizon* (1940). In his time he has been a gardener, a bell-ringer, a dance-band leader, and a Curator of Eccentricities for the Festival of Britain. His hobbies are playing the fiddle, digging holes, and holding his breath under water."

ROBERT CRAFT is one of the most gifted of the young American conductors. He was born in 1923, and lives in Hollywood where he conducts the Monday Evening Concerts. He has conducted almost all over Europe, and last December came to England to conduct the concert held at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, when Stravinsky was present at the first performance in London of his *Canticum Sacrum* in honour of St. Mark.

HENRY FAIRLIE is political commentator for the *Daily Mail*.... PETER WILDEBLOOD is the author of *Against the Law* and *A Way of Life*.... JAMES JOLL, the Vice-Warden of St. Antony's, Oxford, is the author of *The Second International, 1889–1914*.... Dannie Abse's new book of poems will be published this autumn by Hutchinson.... Richard Hofstadter, Professor of History at Columbia University, is the author of *The American Political Tradition*, *The Age of Reform*, and other works.... C. M. WOODHOUSE is the Director General of the Royal Institute of International Affairs.... SIDNEY HOOK, generally recognised as the successor to John Dewey as spokesman of American philosophical pragmatism, is Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the Washington Square College of Arts and Science, New York University. He is the author of several studies on questions of civil liberties, as well as of many well-known books on modern political and educational thinking.

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